Chhawchharia

ADBHUTA RĀMĀYAṆA

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CHH-A

भारती प्रकाशन, वारा

ADBHUTA RĀMĀYAṆA

Sanskrit Text with Transliteration, English Commentary alongwith Explanatory Notes, Relevant Appendices etc.

Commentary by

Sri Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia

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THE
CHAUKHAMBA SURBHARATI STUDIES
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ADBHUTA RĀMĀYAṆA

of

Śrīmad-Vālmīki

Sanskrit Text with Transliteration, English Commentary
alongwith Explanatory Notes, Relevant Appendices etc.

Compiled and Translated by
Sri Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia

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गुरुकुल कांगड़ी विश्वविद्यालय

CHAUKHAMBA SURBHARATI PRAKASHAN
VARANASI

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CHAUKHAMBA SANSKRIT PRATISHTHAN
38 U.A. Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar
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CHOWKHAMBA VIDYABHAWAN
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To My Most Beloved Lord Ram

A Humble Word from Author

No creature is perfect; it's foolhardy to claim so. The best of paintings cannot replace the original; the best of words cannot express the original emotions and sentiments. Even the Lord was not satisfied by one flower or butterfly – he went on endlessly evolving and designing new forms.

Honestly, I am totally incompetent – it is the Lord who has done the actual writing and had moved my fingers as if they were mere instruments in his divine hands. But nonetheless, it's a tribute to the Lord's glory that he does not take the credit himself, but bestows it to them whom he loves as his very own. And to be his very own is indeed an unmatched honour. However, I still beg forgiveness for all omissions, commissions and transgressions that I may have inadvertently made. It's the Lord's glories that I sing, rejoice in, write on and think of to the best of my ability. I hope the readers will also absorb the divine fragrance effusing from the flowers representing the Lord's books, enjoy the ambrosia pouring out of them and marvel at the Lord's stupendous glories.

This effort is submitted at the Lord's holy feet, and finding no word to express my gratitude to him, I just wish to remain quiet, and let my silence do the speaking and praying on my behalf.

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia

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Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia

PREFACE

रामायणमितिख्यातं शतकोटिप्रविस्तरम्। (सर्ग 1, श्लोक 2½)
rāmāyaṇamitikhyātaṃ śatakoṭipravistaram / (*sarga 1, śl. 2½*)
पञ्चविंशतिसाहस्त्रं रामायणमिदं भुविः।। (सर्ग 1, श्लोक 4)
pañcaviṃśatisāhasraṃ rāmāyaṇamidaṃ bhuviḥ // (sarga 1, śl. 4)
किं गीतमिह मुष्णाति तन्मे कथय सुव्रत । (सर्ग 1, श्लोक 5½)
kiṃ gītamiha muṣṇāti tanme kathaya suvrata / (*sarga 1, śl. 5½*)

Sage Bhāradvāja asked seer Vālmīki, 'Rāmāyaṇa is said to be spread in hundreds of thousands of verses. Out of them, twenty five thousand versions are available here on this earth. Out of these, please be kind to tell me that story which is most secret, magnificent, mysterious and hitherto undisclosed and unknown in this world' (canto 1, verse nos. 2½, 4, 5½).

शृणुष्वावाहितोब्रह्मन्! काकुत्स्थचरितं महत् ।
सीताया मूलभूतायाः प्रकृतेश्चरितञ्च यत् ।। (सर्ग 1, श्लोक 11)
śṛṇuṣvāvāhitobrahman! kākutsthacaritaṃ mahat /
sītāyā mūlabhūtāyāḥ prakṛteścaritañca yat // (sarga 1, ślo. 11)

Vālmīki replied, inter alia, 'Oh Brāhmin! Listen carefully to the great and glorious story related to the worldly deeds done by the heir of the Kakutstha clan (i.e. Śrī Rāma) in which the stupendously glorious and fascinating deeds done by Sītā, who was a gross manifestation of the subtle primary, eclectic, ethereal energy and sublime force of creation, which are robust, vigorous and effective and called Mother Nature or 'Prakṛti', assumes a preeminent role' (canto 1, verse no. 11).

'Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa', as the name suggests, describes the most strange, wonderful, mysterious and awe-inspiring fascinating story of Rāmāyaṇa, the chronology of the fantastic worldly deeds done by

Śrī Rāma and Sītā, who were manifestations of Lord Viṣṇu and his divine consort Goddess Lakṣmī respectively on the earth to get rid of evil forces personified by the demons, which was hitherto unknown in this world. It is a strange and mysterious story, quite different from the general perception about the story of Rāmāyaṇa in which Śrī Rāma is the main hero and he occupies the central stage throughout the epic. This is the story where Sītā, who was not only the manifestation of Goddess Lakṣmī and a divine consort of Śrī Rāma but also of the primary forces of and energy responsible for creation, collectively called 'Prakṛti' (Nature) and 'Māyā' (deluding powers of Nature), plays a prominent role. The story revolves around Sītā more than it does around Śrī Rāma, and it seeks to establish the greatness, the valour and courage, the strength, powers and potentials, the glory and majesty of women and womanhood which are traditionally so much adored, admired, honoured and praised in India more than men and manhood. It is the 'mother' who really takes care of the world created by the father; it is Sītā who provided succour and restored peace in the world when she finally killed the thousand headed Rāvaṇa of Puṣkara, who was the elder brother of the 10-headed Rāvaṇa of Laṅkā and equal number of times more powerful than his younger sibling, even though Śrī Rāma failed to subdue and vanquish him. It was Sītā who finally overcame this great demon, restored peace on this earth by eliminating the scourage of all evil mongering demons representing vices and perversions on this earth. It was she who forcefully restored the balance in favour of righteousness and auspiciousness by eliminating all inimical forces that came in the way of righteousness and virtuousness.

The story of triumph and tragedy unfolds in 27 Cantos, and is an unconventional depiction of the epic story of Rāmāyaṇa in various aspects. For one, it does not have the standard pattern of 7 'Kāṇḍas' or Chapters of the conventional Rāmāyaṇa (which are Bāla Kāṇḍa, Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa, Araṇya Kāṇḍa, Kiṣkindhā Kāṇḍa, Sundara Kāṇḍa, Laṅkā Kāṇḍa and Uttara Kāṇḍa). Rather, it is divided into 27 Cantos forming one homogenous text. Second, the reason why sage Nārada cursed Viṣṇu has been elaborately dealt with, as is the story of king Ambrīṣa who was one of the ancestors of Lord Rāma (Canto 1-4). Third, Sītā's birth has been described in great detail and it establishes, most unconventionally again, that she was an immaculate conception of Mandodarī, the wife of 10-headed Rāvaṇa. This particular episode of

Sītā's strange birth gives a real mysterious twist to the generally held view about the birth and parentage of Sītā, but a careful reading will dispel all doubts of any wrong doing or occurrence of any unrighteousness pertaining to her birth (canto 8). Earlier, the story describes why and how sage Nārada had cursed Lakṣmī to force her to take birth as Sītā and become the daughter of Mandodarī, the wife of the 10-headed Rāvaṇa (canto 5-7).

Next we find that the author of the epic, sage Vālmīki, has skipped all other events related to Śrī Rāma's childhood, his going with sage Viśvāmitra to protect his fire sacrifice, and the marriage of Śrī Rāma and his brothers with Sītā and her sisters at Janakapura. Our story of 'Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa' comes straight down to sage Paraśurāma coming angrily for a stand off with Śrī Rāma when the former learnt about the breaking of Lord Śiva's bow, called 'Pināka', by Śrī Rāma, and which was a condition set by Sītā's worldly father Janaka for her marriage. He met the marriage party while it was on its way back to Ayodhyā with the brides. Śrī Rāma confronted the sage boldly, vanquished his haughtiness and his sense of superiority as a vanquisher of the Kṣatriya clan (verse nos. 10-16); Śrī Rāma then showed the sage his 'Virāṭ form' which was the macrocosmic, all encompassing divine and colossus form of the supreme Lord of the cosmos (in verse nos. 17-20½). The sage's 'Teja' (the divine energy, strength, powers and potentials which he possessed), which was given to him earlier by Lord Viṣṇu, was snatched by the Lord, and the crest fallen sage was advised by him to go and do severe penances and austerities to recover them. All this is covered in canto no. 9.

Moving ahead with the fabulous story, we find that once again the narration jumps straight to Śrī Rāma meeting Hanumāna and showing him his 4-armed vision of Viṣṇu in canto 10. This, in conjunction with the Virāṭ form shown to Paraśurāma in Canto 9, completes the depiction of Śrī Rāma's true divine form as the supreme Lord of creation. Then the discourse between Śrī Rāma and Hanumāna follows, which expounds on the philosophy postulated and propounded by Vedānta relating to the Ātmā/soul, Brahma, the elements called 'Bhūtas', the creatures, their interrelationship with each other, the concept of 'Mokṣa' (liberation and deliverance, emancipation and salvation etc.) in canto nos. 11, 12 and 14. The concept of 'Bhakti' (devotion, faith, reverence, allegiance, submission and surrender to the supreme Lord by his devotee) is also elucidated in detail in canto no. 13. These four cantos (nos. 11-14) have a high element of spiritual quotient and contain almost all the principle tenets of the Upaniṣads presented in a succinct manner.

Realising the true form of Śrī Rāma as the supreme Lord personified and manifested as a human, Hanumāna praises him and prays to him in canto 15.

The entire episode of Śrī Rāma crossing the ocean, defeating and slaying the 10-headed Rāvaṇa at Laṅkā and coming back to Ayodhyā to be crowned king have been summed up in merely 20 verses of canto 16 to emphasise the point that the main thrust of this 'Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa' is not to repeat what is the already known story of Śrī Rāma, a story which highlights and glorifies Śrī Rāma's victory over the king of Laṅkā, but to emphasise the point that something more formidable was still to be achieved by the divine couple. A greater, many times more powerful and invincible enemy in the form of the thousand headed Rāvaṇa of Puṣkara still existed, and unless he was vanquished, the real glory of the divine couple Śrī Rāma and Sītā would not have reached its pinnacle.

So we move on to the second half of the story. The real fascinating story of Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa starts from canto 17 when Sītā informs the royal court of Śrī Rāma, attended by great sages and seers who had assembled there to congratulate and honour Śrī Rāma for his victory over the Rāvaṇa of Laṅkā, about the existence of a superior enemy in the form of a thousand headed Rāvaṇa who ruled at Puṣkara, and who was the elder brother of the 10-headed Rāvaṇa of Laṅkā. She tells the assembly how she had come to know about him. This inspired Śrī Rāma to launch an audicious campaign against this formidable enemy. Canto 18-22 describe the ferocious, no-holds-barred war between the two, Śrī Rāma and the thousand headed Rāvaṇa of Puṣkara, which ultimately lead to Śrī Rāma being defeated and gravely wounded and lying unconscious in the battlefield in canto 22, verse nos. 48-50.

There was a terrible cry of distress, grief and dismay amongst the Gods who panicked when Śrī Rāma fell. At their urgent appeal, Sītā assumed the most terrible and horrifying form of 'Mahākālī', the great black goddess of death and destruction. Canto no. 23 describes her killing of this formidable and ferocious demon, along with his sons and army, single handedly. At that time, the Goddess Mahākālī had danced the ferocious and most terrifying 'dance of death' which sent chill down the spine of all the Gods as well as the sages and seers who feared that the creation would be annihilated by her wrath. The eerie description of the battlefield is really spine and bone chilling, and it vividly describes a scenario that is reflective of the view of the landscape, the horrendous occurrences, the horrifying, blood cuddling bloodshed and mayhem that occurs during an annihilating war of destruction and death. This canto describes how the divine cosmic force of Nature was unleashed by the Lord when all other more conventional means of eliminating evil, pervert and sinful forces from this earth proved futile. When conventional steps were not sufficient, drastic measures were taken by Mother Nature.

In order to calm Sītā down, now in her fierce, vicious and relentless form as Mahākālī, the Gods, lead by Brahmā who is the patriarch of creation, prayed to her most humbly and assured her that Śrī Rāma would soon come back to life and regain his consciousness. This is described in canto no. 24.

When Śrī Rāma finally regained his consciousness, he was stunned to see the terrifying form of Mahākālī and was terrified on observing the haunting scene of death and destruction lying strewn all around him. When asked who she was, Sītā, as Mahākālī, described and showed to Śrī Rāma her true form, which was the stupendous, glorious, majestic and colossus form of the cosmic Goddess who is the 'boss' of all that exists, in canto 25, verse no. 5-14½. This held Śrī Rāma awed and spellbound. Then follows the marvelous and fascinating Stotras or hymns in the praise of the Goddess. Śrī Rāma prayed to her, brimming over with devotion and reverence, with these Stotras and he worshipped the great Goddess in her majestic, macrocosmic, divine, sublime and subtle manifestation as the Goddess of the universe. These hymns essentially take the form of '1008 names' of the Goddess which are the different adjectives or epithets or metaphors used to describe the different virtues, glories and attributes of the cosmic Śakti which has manifested itself in the form of Mahākālī in the battlefield of Puṣkara. She is the stupendous force and energy primarily responsible for creating, unfolding, sustaining, enhancing, developing, regulating and finally concluding the entire creation, the forces which are so stupendous, so powerful and potent that they accomplished what Śrī

Rāma, who was himself an incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu and who was a manifestation of the Virāṭ Puruṣa, could not do himself with all the strength, powers, potentials and authority that he had at his command. All the unaccomplished task of getting rid of evil forces from this earth which Śrī Rāma could not do himself were done by Sītā in her manifestation as Mahākālī. What Śrī Rāma could not do after fighting fiercely with the thousand headed Rāvaṇa for a longtime, was done by Sītā, as Mahākālī, within a short span of time.

In fact, the entire canto no. 25 is dedicated to these magnificent hymns called Stotras, and is unique in the sense that it is the only text which sings the glories of the great goddess, the mother of creation, the divine female aspect of creation, using a wide swathe of metaphysical concepts extending from the gross to the most subtlest. I have tried to explain all these 1008 words with their simple meaning and implication to add beauty, succulence, life and vibrancy to this epic story of Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa.

This pure metaphysical form of worship is followed by a spiritual and devotional form of prayer in canto no. 26. These two cantos (no. 25 and 26), read with cantos 9 to 14, mark the pinnacle of the spiritual glory of this Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa.

Pleased by Śrī Rāma's prayer, Goddess Mahākālī sheds her horrifying and terrible form, and she calms down to her original form of the pleasant looking, benevolent, charming, docile, gentle and sweet form of Sītā. The Gods celebrated the occasion by beating kettledrums and showering flower as Śrī Rāma and Sītā prepared to come back to Ayodhyā from Puṣkara after vanquishing and slaying the thousand headed Rāvaṇa, thereby removing the last hurdle to world peace.

The final canto no. 27 describes Śrī Rāma's arrival at Ayodhyā and his bidding good bye to the monkeys and demons (the companions of Sugrīva and Vibhīṣaṇa respectively who had earlier been invited to join the campaign against the thousand headed Rāvaṇa). Sage Vālmīki concludes the narration by describing the genesis of this special version of Śrī Rāma's story (verse no. 19-22) and lists the benefits of hearing and reading it (verse no. 14-18, 31-32).

A summary of the whole story is also included by Vālmīki himself at the end of canto no. 27, in verse no. 23-30, as an epilogue.

In this last canto no. 27, Vālmīki gives the reason why he has skipped so many important and well known episodes in the life story of Śrī Rāma, and has instead mentioned only selected episodes which were hitherto unknown to the people. The sage says himself— एतत्ते कथितं भद्रे भारद्वाज महामते। तेषु किञ्चिदिहाश्चर्यमुक्तं रामकथाश्रयम्।। सर्वं न वक्तुमिच्छामि पुररुक्तिभयादद्विज। (सर्ग 27, श्लोक 10½-11½). That is, 'Oh gentleman and wise Bhāradvāja! I have told you all for your sake. Śrī Rāma's stories are innumerable. Out of them I have described only a few strange and mysterious, most amazing and astounding events (which were hitherto unknown to you). It is not possible to describe all of them, or I wished to avoid the rest for fear of repetition' (canto 27, verse no. 10½-11½). Indeed, Vālmīki's other well known and more popular version of the great epic story of Śrī Rāma's life is simply known as 'Rāmāyaṇa' without the prefix 'Adbhuta' attached to it. That Rāmāyaṇa was almost a historical rendering of the events as they occurred, because Vālmīki was a contemporary sage of Śrī Rāma even as Veda Vyāsa, who was a contemporary of Lord Kṛṣṇa, had described the epic war known as Mahābhārata in his voluminous Bhāgvata Mahāpurāṇa. But Vālmīki had a pang of discomfort gnawing away at his heart. He was not satisfied with what he wrote in his epic 'Rāmāyaṇa'. Though it was a truthful narration of the story, but in it he had treated Śrī Rāma as a noble and great emperor, most virtuous, righteous, strong and powerful. But that story lacked the metaphysical import and prowess shown by Veda Vyāsa when he described Kṛṣṇa's 'Virāṭ form' which he had shown to Arjuna when he was reluctant to enter war at the beginning of the Mahābhārata battle, or when he penned his great epic 'Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa' (an English version of which has been published separately by this author). Further, Sītā, or for that matter a woman and womanhood, was depicted in a negative frame as being at the receiving end of male dominance in Indian society—she was the one who always suffered, and she was destined to her cruel destiny without the chance, authority and powers to resist. Perhaps, while describing Sītā's torments at Laṅkā where she was in the captivity of the 10-headed Rāvaṇa and her anguish at her second separation from Śrī Rāma when she was exiled to sage Vālmīki's hermitage where her two sons Lava and Kuśa were born, inspired and compelled Vālmīki to set the record straight by showing that Sītā was far superior in courage, boldness, fortitude, strength, valour, potent and prowess than what she had been traditionally depicted to be. She epitomizes power and bravery, courage and gall. This is very evident when she admonishes and chastens the sages while they were eulogising Śrī Rāma's victory over the 10-headed Rāvaṇa. She said, 'Whatever the sages have said in praise of Śrī Rāma is ridiculous and uncalled for. It smacks of sycophancy. The slaying of the 10-headed Rāvaṇa is not worthy of the praise that is being lavished upon Śrī Rāma' (canto 17, verse 18, 19½). 'When he (Śrī Rāma) kills the thousand faced Rāvaṇa, then only will his mettle, fame and glory spread, and the world will feel healthy, comfortable and reassured of peace and tranquility' (canto 18, verse no. 5-6).

We learn that Śrī Rāma proved indeed very incompetent in front of this senior Rāvaṇa, and he was made to bite the dust of the battlefield at Puṣkara, as is evident in canto 22, verse nos. 48-50. Then Vālmīki was in his true elements when he described how Sītā assumed the most formidable form of the great goddess of death and destruction, known as Mahākālī, killed the enemy in a short time and was honoured and praised by Śrī Rāma himself when he was shown her eclectic, colossus, magnificent, majestic and divine form. He fervently prayed to her in great humility, singing hymns that are considered the best piece of devotional Stotras or hymns offered to honour the 'Śakti' or energy, power, strength and vitality aspect of Mother Nature herself, as is clear in canto 25, verse no. 16 till canto 26, verse no. 37.

This Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa is also called **'Adbhutottara Kāṇḍam'** (अद्‌भुतोत्तरकाण्डम्) as is clear from canto 27, verse no. 19. This means that this story is the most excellent, the most amazing, the most mysterious narration of the deeds done by Śrī Rāma and Sītā which are very fascinating and strange as well as extremely marvelous and magnificent in their reach and import.

The 'mystery' aspect and the 'secrecy' of the episodes narrated in this Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa called 'the Adbhutottara Kāṇḍam' had been maintained all along till they were narrated and made public by sage Vālmīki to sage Bhāradvāja, for the simple reason that when Mahākālī assumed the fierce form of the naked Goddess of death and destruction to kill Rāvaṇa, none of the members of Śrī Rāma's army was present there on the battlefield at the time, and even he, Śrī Rāma, lay unconscious. So, though Śrī Rāma narrated the events when he came back to Ayodhyā to his friends as described in canto 27, verse no. 4, he could not describe to them the exact sequence of events which unfolded on the battlefield after he had lost consciousness and before he regained it. The actual killing of Rāvaṇa by Sītā in the form of Mahākālī and her subsequent naked dance of death and annihilation on the battlefield, accompanied by innumerable other evil spirits of war also dancing with her in their naked and ferocious forms, was not known to Śrī Rāma; he was honestly unaware of them. None of the humans, monkeys and demons who had accompanied Śrī Rāma on the campaign were there to see those events either. They could not imagine how Sītā had assumed the horrifying form of Mahākālī playing around with severed skulls as if they were balls, romping and stomping around with blood soaked naked black body, covered with garlands of skulls, blood dripping all over, holding a wildly swaying sword drenched and dripping with blood, with ferociously burning eyes spouting vehement anger and wrath, with blood dripping from her protruded tongue like flames of fire giving out sparkles from the midst of blood-drenched sharp fang-like teeth, howling and prancing, yelling and screeching madly and frantically in the battlefield over corpses, tearing at some of them with her bare incisors and clawing at others with sharp pointed nails!

Further, the way Śrī Rāma prayed submissively to the Goddess after he had regained consciousness after his humiliating defeat at the hands of the thousand headed Rāvaṇa, would not have gone down well with his subjects. They adored Śrī Rāma as their great King Emperor who was very powerful and invincible, courageous and bold. Just imagine what they would have thought had they known that the Lord whom they adored and lauded so much had been made to bite the dust of the battlefield when faced by a strong enemy. This made the story most unacceptable and unconventional for the mass's general consumption. All these events as narrated in this epic 'Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa' had been omitted by Vālmīki in his other epic story of Śrī Rāma, the well known 'Rāmāyaṇa', because it would not have done well to the glory of the emperor that Śrī Rāma was and his followers would have lost their confidence in him. So he (Vālmīki) decided to keep it under wraps and keep quiet for the moment while he was writing the other epic Rāmāyaṇa, but later on when Śrī Rāma's sojourn in this world had come to an end, the sage decided to reveal the hitherto hidden and unknown facts for the benefit of mankind to make the record straight. He decided to undo the injustice done to the depiction of the 'real story' by presenting this 'sequel to the epic Rāmāyaṇa' in the form of this present book called 'Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa' which essentially glorifies Sītā instead of Śrī Rāma.

Another important point is that this Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa focuses on Śrī Rāma and Sītā alone, bypassing all other characters associated with Rāmāyaṇa, relegating them to the background, or not mentioning them altogether—such as the brothers of Śrī Rāma, the monkey king Sugrīva and the demon king Vibhīṣaṇa etc. Even Hanumāna, who is a great comrade-in-arm of Śrī Rāma in all other versions of Rāmāyaṇa, has no role at all to play in the battle with the Rāvaṇa of Puṣkara. Instead, the text lists the individual names of all the warriors and commanders of the army of the thousands headed Rāvaṇa as mentioned in canto 18, verse nos. 43-52, 59-70, as well as his sons as listed in canto 19, verse nos. 2-19, besides describing in detail their forms and demeanours in canto 18, verse no. 53-58 and canto 19, verse no. 10-33.

A general question that rises in the mind is why Śrī Rāma behaved like an ordinary human being if he was the supreme God? Vālmīki has answered this question in canto 4, verse nos. 60-81. I have appended my own notes to the verses to amply clarify the points and leave no doubts in the mind.

Thus we see that 'Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa' or the 'Adbhutottara Kāṇḍam' as it is named by Vālmīki himself in canto 27, verse no. 19, is a most fascinating and marvelous but unconventional rendering of the great story of Śrī Rāma highlighting those spectacular events, those episodes which are mysterious and strange to hear, almost on the edge of incredulity. It was a closely guarded secret kept with Brahmā, the creator and patriarch of creation, who first divulged it to Nārada, the celestial sage, and from him sage Vālmīki came to know about it; this is clearly mentioned in canto 27, verse no. 20. It was first described by Vālmīki to Indra and then to Bhāradvāja, the present listener of this beautiful story; this is mentioned in canto no. 27, verse no. 19.

Śrī Rāma's story is most charming and fascinating while being spiritually elevating at the same time. For this humble author, Śrī Rāma is his entire being, the purpose of existence, the means of existence and the end of existence. Even as a seed will sprout into a new flowering plant no matter which side of it is facing down or up, the contentment and peace, the happiness and joy, the sense of fulfillment and accomplishment derived from describing the Lord's story is indeed most uplifting and elevating for one's spirit.

I have introduced each canto with an outline synopsis of the main theme in it. The introductory synopsis will also help to link the particular canto with the general story of Rāmāyaṇa, and prepare the reader to enjoy the text better.

It would be pertinent to learn about who the author of this epic story, sage Vālmīki, was. So I have included an elaborate appendix no. 1 which would quite exhaustively present a comprehensive picture about this great and enlightened sage, a wise and erudite seer, an accomplished hermit and ascetic who was one of the greatest scholars that ever walked on this earth, i.e. the great sage Vālmīki. Numerous fascinating facts about him have been presented with citations from the Vedas and Purāṇas and other texts that not only tell us about his early life but also bring out the fact that he was a great narrator of the Purāṇas and a classifier of the Vedas also. Incidentally, appendix no. 2 has a fascinating 'Sūkta' from Ṛg Veda supposed to have been written by sage Vālmīki in his incarnation as the 24th Veda Vyāsa. I hope that these two appendices would be very informative for the reader.

I most sincerely, honestly and from the deepest recesses of my heart thank **Shri Navneet Das Gupta** ji of **Chaukhamba Surbharati Prakashan, Varanasi,** for holding this torch illuminating the divine glories of Śrī Rāma as sung by the great and enlightened sage, the wise and erudite seer Vālmīki, by publishing this great epic known as **'Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa'**. Not everyone gets a chance to serve the Lord. The Lord picks and chooses them carefully, and like the apostles of Jesus Christ, they who are selected by Him to render service to Him are indeed most fortunate and privileged. Indeed, therefore, Shri Neeraj Gupta ji deserves a standing ovation for being selected by the Lord for this great honour. Mere thanks on my part will be insufficient to express my deep sense of gratitude to him to get this book published.

In fact, this narration has been inspired by the Lord himself, my fingers being only instrumental in holding the pen as it flowed on the paper. Therefore, all the credit goes to Śrī Rāma while I might be forgiven for the errors of omission and commission, of transgression and impertinence, as I am an ordinary human being with a bag full of my limitations and incompetencies. The credit also goes to Hanumāna whom I revere as my moral preceptor and protector without whose support any work relating to Śrī Rāma remains unsuccessful and unaccomplished. And, finally the credit goes to Shri Neeraj Gupta ji of Chaukhambha Publishing House, New Delhi for enabling this flower to blossom in the form of a book.

I hope the reader will enjoy the text inspite of my shortcomings and would marvel at the greatness of this story and the fascinating mystery of the revealed tale aptly titled 'Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa' or 'Adbhutottara Kāṇḍam'.

Ajai Kumar Chhawchhara

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia

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KEY TO TRANSLITERATION

स्वराः / Svarāḥ / Vowels							
a अ	ā आ	i इ	ī ई	u उ	ū ऊ	ṛ ऋ	ṝ ॠ
	e ए	ai ऐ	o ओ	au औ	aṃ अं	aḥ अः	
Anusvāra ं , ँ ṃ				Visarga : ḥ			

व्यञ्जनाः / Vyañjanāḥ / Consonants									
k क्	ka क	kh ख्	kha ख	g ग्	ga ग	gh घ्	gha घ	ṅ ङ्	ṅa ङ
c च्	ca च	ch छ्	cha छ	j ज्	ja ज	jh झ्	jha झ	ñ ञ्	ña ञ
ṭ ट्	ṭa ट	ṭh ठ्	ṭha ठ	ḍ ड्	ḍa ड	ḍh ढ्	ḍha ढ	ṇ ण्	ṇa ण
t त्	ta त	th थ्	tha थ	d द्	da द	dh ध्	dha ध	n न्	na न
p प्	pa प	ph फ्	pha फ	b ब्	ba ब	bh भ्	bha भ	m म्	ma म
	y य्	ya य	r र्	ra र	l ल्	la ल	v व्	va व	
	ś श्	śa श	ṣ ष्	ṣa ष	s स्	sa स	h ह्	ha ह	
		kṣ क्ष्	kṣa क्ष	tr त्र्	tra त्र	jñ ज्ञ्	jña ज्ञ		

ADBHUTA RĀMĀYAṆA

of

Śrīmad-Vālmīki

Valmīkis'

ADBHUTA RĀMĀYAṆA

Canto 1

Prologue
Declaration of Divinity of Śrī Rāma and Sītā

Sage Bhāradvāja approached the great sage Vālmīki, who was the senior most, scholarly and the wisest amongst those sages who stayed on the banks of river Tamasā, and asked him to narrate the story of Śrī Rāma, called Rāmāyaṇa, with emphasis on its secret and mysterious aspects which were hitherto undisclosed and unknown. Thus unfolded this great and fascinating 'Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa' which highlights the stupendous, but yet kept in wraps, deeds of Sītā, the divine consort of Śrī Rāma. In this canto, her divinity as well as that of Śrī Rāma are being enumerated, and then their non-dual essential nature is proclaimed. This canto is like a prologue, an introduction to the whole story that follows this canto.

तमसातीरनिलयं निलयं तपसां गुरुम्। वचसां प्रथमं स्थानं वाल्मीकिं मुनिपुङ्गवम्।। 1।।
विनयावनतोभूत्वा भारद्वाजोमहामुनिः। अपृच्छत्सम्मतः शिष्यः कृताञ्जलिपुटो वशी।।2।।

tamasātīranilayaṃ nilayaṃ tapasāṃ gurum /
vacasāṃ prathamaṃ sthānaṃ vālmīkiṃ munipuṅgavam //
vinayāvanatobhūtvā bhāradvājomahāmuniḥ /
apṛcchatsammataḥ śiṣyaḥ kṛtāñjalipuṭo vaśī //

The most exalted sage Vālmīki lived near the banks of river Tamasā. He was the senior most amongst the sages and seers living there. Hence, he was their teacher and preceptor. The faculty of speech (and its patron Goddess, Sarasvatī) symbolically had an exalted seat in his mouth (i.e. he was a fine speaker, an expert orator, well versed with the intricacies of language, and had mastery over grammar) (1).

The great sage named Bhāradvāja presented himself before him with joined hands as a gesture of humility and submission, to show respect to the great sage like a disciple does before his moral preceptor and teacher, called a Guru. [That is, Bhāradvāja, who was a great sage himself, approached Vālmīki, who was senior to him, with joined hands as a mark of respect, as if the former was the latter's disciple, in order to hear the divine story of Śrī Rāma from him.] He reverentially requested Vālmīki—(2) [1-2].

रामायणमितिख्यातं शतकोटिप्रविस्तरम्। प्रणीतं भवता यच्च ब्रह्मलोके प्रतिष्ठितम्।। 3।।
श्रूयते ब्रह्मणा नित्यमृषिभिः पितृभिः सुरैः। पञ्चविंशतिसाहस्त्रं रामायणमिदं भुविः।। 4।।
तदाकर्णि तमस्माभिः सविशेषं महामुने।। 4½।।

rāmāyaṇamitikhyātaṃ śatakoṭipravistaram /
praṇītaṃ bhavatā yacca brahmaloke pratiṣṭhitam //
śrūyate brahmaṇā nityamṛṣibhiḥ pitṛbhiḥ suraiḥ /
pañcaviṃśatisāharaṃ rāmāyaṇamidaṃ bhuviḥ //
tadākarṇi tamasmābhiḥ saviśeṣaṃ mahāmune /

'Rāmāyaṇa is very famous and stupendously magnificent. It is spread across hundreds of thousands of verses. It has been described and elucidated in great detail by you (or you have enunciated it and elaborately described it for the benefit of the people on earth). It is even established and famed in the Brahma Loka (the heaven) (3).

There (in the heaven), it is regularly heard most attentively and devotedly by Brahmā (the creator), the holy celestial sages and seers, and the Gods and the spirits of ancestors (who reside in the heaven). Out of its countless variations, twenty thousand versions are available here on earth, and oh great and exalted sage, we have heard them (4½) [3-4½].

शतकोटिप्रविस्तारे रामायणमहार्णवे।। 5।।
किं गीतमिह मुष्णाति तन्मे कथय सुव्रत।। 5½।।

śatakoṭipravistāre rāmāyaṇamanārṇave //
kiṃ gītamiha muṣṇāti tanme kathaya suvrata /

But, oh the righteous one, which of the episodes in the whole story, or which of the aspects of this vast repository of Śrī Rāma's divine story, extending to hundreds of thousands of verses, is secret, hitherto unknown, strange and mysterious ? Please do describe, or narrate them to us in detail' (5-5½).

आकर्ण्यादरिणः पृष्ठं भारद्वाजस्य वै मुनिः ।। 6 ।।
हस्तामलकवत्सर्वं सस्मार शतकोटिकम् । ओमित्युक्त्वा मुनिः शिष्यं प्रोवाच वदतां वरम् ।। 7 ।।

ākarṇyādariṇaḥ pṛṣṭhaṃ bhāradvājasya vai muniḥ //
hastāmalakavatsarvaṃ sasmāra śatakoṭikam /
omityuktvā muniḥ śiṣyaṃ provāca vadataṃ varam //

Hearing this request or plea from Bhāradvāja, the sage (Vālmīki) recalled the entire Rāmāyaṇa spread in hundreds of thousands of verses, about which he was well versed and expert, or which was well within the grasp of his knowledge and intellect, and on which he was deemed to be the only authority existing at the time. Saying 'so be it' to his disciple (sage Bhāradvāja), he began in earnest his discourse or narration of those aspects of the great story of Śrī Rāma's life, known as Rāmāyaṇa, which were strange, mysterious, spectacular, and hitherto undisclosed and unknown (6-7).

भारद्वाज! चिरञ्जीव साधु स्मारितमद्य नः ।। 7½ ।।

bhāradvāja ! cirañjīva sādhu smāritamadya naḥ /

'Oh Bhāradvāja! Have a long and happy life. You have reminded me of an excellent topic or subject (and I am very glad and bless you for it) (7½).

शतकोटिप्रविस्तारे रामायणमहार्णवे ।। 8 ।।
रामस्य चरितं सर्वमाश्चर्यं सम्यगीरितम् । पञ्चविंशतिसाहस्त्रं भूलोके यत् प्रतिष्ठितम् ।। 9 ।।
नृणां हि सदृशं रामचरितं वर्णितं ततः । सीतामहात्म्यसारं यद्विशेषादत्र नोक्तवान् ।। 10 ।।

śatakoṭipravistāre rāmāyaṇamahārṇave //
rāmasya caritaṃ sarvamāścaryaṃ sāmyagīritam /
pañcaviṃśatisāhasraṃ bhūloke yat pratiṣṭhitam //
nṛṇaṃ hi sadṛśaṃ rāmacaritaṃ varṇitaṃ tataḥ /
sītāmahātmyasāraṃ yadviśeṣādatra noktavān //

In the vast, fathomless and measureless ocean representing the story of Rāmāyaṇa spreading for hundreds and thousands of units (verses) (8), the character and glory of Śrī Rāma stands out as being most astounding, astonishing, unparalled, marvelous, magnificent, stupendous, strange, mysterious and most fascinating. In the twenty five thousand versions of Rāmāyaṇa established and prevalent in this world (earth) (9), Śrī Rāma's character and role has been narrated as if he was a human, albeit an exalted and noble one. But Sītā's glories and greatness, her majestic divinity and stupendously marvelous authority, powers and prowess have been sidelined or not given its due importance and prominence (10) [8-10].

श्रृणुष्वावाहितोब्रह्मन्! काकुत्स्थचरितं महत्। सीताया मूलभूतायाः प्रकृतेश्चरितश्च यत्।। 11।।

śṛṇuṣvāvāhitobrahman ! kākutsthacaritaṃ mahat /
sītāyā mūlabhūtāyāḥ prakṛteścaritaśca yat //

Oh Brāhmin (Bhāradvāja)! Now listen carefully to the epoch-making great and glorious story of the deeds done by the heir of the Kākutstha clan (Śrī Rāma) in which the fascinating, stupendous and marvelous deeds done by Sītā, who was a visible manifestation of the primary, subtle, ethereal and eclectic forces and sublime energy of creation which are robust, vigorous and effective, or Mother Nature (or Prakṛti) personified, occupy a prominent position (11).

[Note :—King Kākutstha was a valiant and brave king of the solar dynasty. He was a forefather of Śrī Rāma, and his sons bear his name as the title of the family to which they belong.]

आश्चर्यमाश्चर्यमिदं गोपितं ब्रह्मणोगृहे। हिताय प्रियशिष्याय तुभ्यमावेदयामि तत्।। 12।।

āścaryamāścaryamidaṃ gopitaṃ brahmaṇogṛhe /
hitāya priyaśiṣyāya tubhyamāvedayāmi tat //

That secret which is most mysterious and strange but marvelous and fascinating and was till now lying concealed amongst so many other secrets lying hidden in the divine abode of Brahmā, the creator, I shall narrate it for the benefit of a favoured and loving disciple like you (12).

जानकी प्रकृतिः सृष्टेरादिभूता महागुणा। तपःसिद्धि स्वर्गसिद्धिर्भूतिर्मूर्तिमतां सती।। 13।।

jānakī prakṛtiḥ sṛṣṭerādibhūtā mahāguṇā /
tapaḥsiddhi svargasiddhirbhūtirmūrtimatāṃ satī //

Jānakī (Sītā) is an image or personification of Prakṛti (see verse no. 11 above). She is the primary primordial force present even before the creation of the basic Bhūtas (elements) of life came into existence. She is endowed with great, majestic, stupendous and wonderful virtues of powers, strength, potentials and prowess. She is an embodiment of the rewards obtained by doing Tapa (severe austerities, penances and observing of strict religious vows). She embodies success in obtaining heaven (or an exalted stature, both in this world as well as in heaven). She is majesty, fame, glory, grandeur, renown, success, accomplishment, good fortunes and potentials personified, and she embodies all of all them in herself. She is an embodiment and personification of such excellent virtues as chastity, loyalty, immaculacy, righteousness, probity, propriety, nobility and virtuousness (13).

विद्याविद्या च महती गीयते ब्रह्मवादिभिः। ऋषिः सिद्धिर्गुणमयी गुणातीता गुणात्मिका।। 14।।

vidyāvidyā ca mahatī gīyate brahmavādibhiḥ /
ṛṣiḥ siddhirguṇamayī guṇātītā guṇātmikā //

Those who are expert in the knowledge pertaining to the supreme, transcendental Brahma, actually sing her (Sītā's) glories when they elucidate and expound about the concepts of Vidyā and Avidyā (i.e. what constitute the essential truth and absolute reality of this creation, and what constitute ignorance, illusions and delusion about this world which takes a creature away from this truth and reality). She is an embodiment of all successes, accomplishment and achievements as well as of the mystical powers, potentials, strengths and prowess, collectively called 'Siddhis'. She possess all glories, fames, majesties, prosperities and good fortune, collectively known as 'Ṛddhis'. She is not only an image of all these virtues and noble qualities called the different 'Guṇas', but she transcends them all (i.e. she is far superior to all of them taken together). She is like a benchmark or yardstick or criteria by which other virtues and qualities are measured or weighed against (14).

ब्रह्मब्रह्माण्डसम्भूता सर्वकारणकारणम्। प्रकृतिर्विकृतिर्देवी चिन्मयी चिद्विलासिनी।। 15।।

brahmabrahmāṇḍasambhūtā sarvakāraṇakāraṇam /
prakṛtirvikṛtirdevī cinmayī cidvilāsinī //

She is universally and uniformally present in both the Brahma (the unmanifest supreme authority of the creation from whom the rest of the creation has manifested) as well as the creation of that Brahmā, the 'Brahmāṇḍa' (i.e. the entire manifested cosmos). She is at the root of all causes and reasons in the world. She is the supreme patron Goddess of both Mother Nature known as 'Prakṛti' as well as its opposite, the 'Vikṛti' (i.e. she controls the good and righteous aspects of this creation, the good and virtuous temperaments, natures, habits, inclinations and tendencies of the creature, as well as the bad, evil, sinful and pervert ones respectively). She is enlightened, wise and intelligent as well as eternal, infinite and vast (15).

महाकुण्डलिनी सर्पानुस्यूता ब्रह्मसंज्ञिता। यस्या विलसितं सर्वं जगदेतच्चराचरम्।। 16।।

mahākuṇḍalinī sarpānusyūtā brahmasaṃjñitā /
yasyā vilasitaṃ sarvaṃ jagadetaccarācaram //

She is honoured with the metaphor of being stupendously great and most powerful 'Mahākuṇḍalinī' which is like a coiled serpent ready to unleash the creative potentials of the cosmic energy of creation present inherently in it. 'Brahma' is an epithet used for her; or Brahma is a synonym for her. [That is, Brahma and Sītā are one and the same; they are a non-dual entity.] This whole animate as well as inanimate creation is nothing else but her maverick creation, created by her as a sport. It is infused, imbued, imbrued, pervaded, completely soaked and drenched by her (i.e. she warps and wefts through it; she pervades the entire creation both from the within as well as from the without); there is nothing that exists where she isn't present (16).

[Note :—Kuṇḍalinī is a term referring to the subtle energy centre present in the human body at the base of the spine. It is lying in a 8-coiled shape, much like a resting serpent. The Upaniṣads dealing with Yoga (meditation) describe in great detail about this Kuṇḍalinī and how to unleash the vast reservoir of cosmic energy lying trapped and untapped in it. It is believed that Brahma-realisation is facilitated, and in fact made possible, by 'uncoiling' this Kuṇḍalinī.]

यामाधाय हृदि ब्रह्मन्! योगिनस्तत्वदर्शिनः। विघट्टयन्ति हृद्ग्रन्थिं भवन्ति सुखमूर्त्तिकाः।। 17।।

yāmādhāya hṛdi brahman ! yoginastatvadarśinaḥ /
vighaṭṭayanti hṛdgranthiṃ bhavanti sukhamūrttikāḥ //

Oh Brāhmin! Those Yogīs (ascetics, sages, seers and hermits) who have a deep and penetrating insight into the knowledge about the essential truth and absolute reality about this creation, and who have succeeded in controlling their restless sense organs, meditate and contemplate upon her in their hearts. By this means, they are able to untie all the knots symbolising ignorance and delusions that have formed knarls around their hearts. When these knots are untied or got rid off, they find peace, bliss and felicity; the became an image of these virtues (17).

यदा यदा हि धर्म्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति सुव्रत!। अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदा प्रकृति सम्भवः।। 18।।

yadā yadā hi dharmmasya glānirbhavati suvrata !/
abhyutthānamadharmasya tadā prakṛti sambhavaḥ//

Oh the keeper of righteous vows ! Whenever righteousness, propriety, probity and virtuousness (collectively called 'Dharma') is on the decline, when those who follow Dharma are tormented and there is an upswing or upsurge of evil and sinful forces, the cosmic mother known as Nature or Prakṛti manifests herself to reverse this evil trend, and instead, she rejuvinates, enhances, redeems and reinstates those virtues which make a comeback in their original glorious and exalted form (18).

[Note :—Verse no. 13-18 proclaim the divinity of Sītā.]

रामः साक्षात् परं ज्योतिः परं धाम परः पुमान्। आकृतौ परमो भेदो न सीतारामयोर्यतः।। 19।।

rāmaḥ sākṣāt paraṃ jyotiḥ paraṃ dhāma paraḥ pumān/
ākṛtau paramo bhedo na sītārāmayoryataḥ//

Śrī Rāma is a personification of the supreme, transcendental and divine 'light' of pure consciouness. He is the truthful and the supreme abode where the soul of all the creatures find solace and succour as well as a final resting place. He is none other than the supreme Lord manifested as a human (i.e. the unmanifest Lord Viṣṇu or Virāṭ Puruṣa has revealed or manifested himself as Śrī Rāma). Though there appears to be differences in their physical, gross and visible forms (because Śrī Rāma is a male and Sītā is a female), but essentially there is absolutely no distinction, no duality whatsoever in the subtle, macrocosmic, supreme, divine and transcendental forms of Śrī Rāma and Sītā (because both are synonymous with Brahma) (19).

रामः सीता जानकी रामभद्रो नाणुर्भेदो नैतयोरस्ति कश्चित्।
सन्तो बुद्ध्वा तत्त्वमेतद्विबुद्धाः पारं याताः संसृतेर्मृत्यु वक्त्रात्।। 20।।

rāmaḥ sītā jānakī rāmabhadro nāṇurbhedo naitayorasti kaścit/
santo buddhvā tattvametadvibuddhāḥ pāraṃ yātāḥ saṃsṛtermṛtyu vaktrāt//

Rāma, Sītā, Jānakī and Rāma Bhadra—there is no distinction, even the minutest and most atomic or miniscule, between them whatsoever. When a pious and devout holy man realises this essential fact, he attains enlightenment and becomes aware of the essential, irrefutable, unequivocal and immutable Truth which the absolute Reality. The rewards of such wisdom and awareness is that such a person breaks free from the fear of death (because he has taken shelter with and obtained the protection of Śrī Rāma and Sītā who are divine Beings and supreme Brahma manifested; because they are the supreme Lord of the creation). Such a person crosses the whirlpool of endless births and deaths (20).

[Note :—'Śrī Rāma and Sītā' stand for the vast, subtle, all-pervading, invisible, unmanifest and macrocosmic aspect of Brahma, whereas 'Jānakī', the daughter of Janaka, and 'Rāma Bhadra', the gentleman known as Śrī Rāma, are their manifested images in this mortal world. Jānakī and Rāma Bhadra are almost like humans, they suffer and even leave this world like humans, but Śrī Rāma and Sītā are immortal and eclectic entities because they are other names by which Brahma is known. The placing of the four words—Rāma, Sītā, Jānakī and Rāma Bhadra—is very significant here; the last two are a 'mirror image' of the first two. That is, 'Rāma Bhadra' is a mirror image of 'Rāma', while 'Jānakī' is a mirror image of 'Sītā'. A mirror image is always illusionary, but it nevertheless 'reflects' something that actually exists, and it is a true copy of the original, for a mirror can only reflect the truth and not an illusion. So, though we cannot see the original form of Brahma, but by knowing Rāma and Sītā as Rāma Bhadra and Jānakī respectively, we are able to grasp the reality and truthfulness of the divine Being.]

रामोऽचिन्त्यो नित्यचित्सर्वसाक्षी सर्वान्तः स्थः सर्वलोकैककर्त्ता।
भर्त्ता हर्त्तानन्दमूर्त्तिर्विभूमा सीतायोगाच्चिन्त्यते योगिभिः सः।।21।।
rāmo'cintyo nityacitsarvasākṣī sarvāntaḥ sthaḥ sarvalokaikakarttā /
bharttā harttānandamūrttirvibhūmā sītāyogāccintyate yogibhiḥ saḥ //

Śrī Rāma is beyond the purview of mind and intellect; he is eternal and immanent; he is pure consciousness personified; he is a witness to all (everything that is happening in this universe, all deeds and actions done and taken in this world are known to him); he is established in the bosom of all the creatures (as their Ātmā or soul); he is the creator, sustainer, nourisher and concluder or annihilator of all the different worlds that exist; he is an embodiment of bliss, peace and felicity, and he is omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, all powerful, almighty and supreme Lord of all. Ascetic, hermits, sages and seers contemplate and meditate upon him along with Sītā (i.e. they remember, invoke, honour, admire, pay homage to and worship Rāma and Sītā together because they treat them alike; they are like the two poles of a magnet which must have these two opposite poles in order to be known as a magnet; both of them are manifestations of the same Brahma) (21).

अपाणिपादो जवनो गृहीता पश्यत्य चक्षुः स शृणोत्यकर्णः।
स वेत्ति विश्वं नहि तस्य वेत्ता तमाहुरन्यं पुरुषं पुराणम्।।22।।
apāṇipādo javano gṛhītā paśyatya cakṣuḥ sa śṛṇotyakarṇaḥ /
sa vetti viśvaṃ nahi tasya vettā tamāhuranyaṃ puruṣaṃ purāṇam //

He (Śrī Rāma), in his divine, macrocosmic, subtle and all-pervading form, is able to go everywhere without having a physical leg to take him there (for the simple reason that he is present everywhere and there is no place where he needs to go). He can accept everything without having a physical hand to accept them. He sees everything though he has no physical eye. Similarly, he hears everything without an ear. He knows all about the cosmos (or the entire creation), but there is no one who knows him fully. He is the one who is called 'Puruṣa' (the macrocosmic unmanifested divine Male aspect of creation, also known as Virāṭ Puruṣa) by the Purāṇas and other scriptures (22).

[Note :—(i) The word 'Puruṣa' literally means a 'male'. The words refers to the male aspect of nature or creation. This aspect is also known as Virāṭ Puruṣa from whom the creator Brahmā emerged, and who himself is a manifested form of the unmanifested Brahma. From the point of a human being, both Brahma and Puruṣa are invisible to a man's naked eye even as distant stars are not visible to us though they exist in the bowels of the universe. (ii) Verse nos. 19-22 proclaim the divinity of Śrī Rāma.]

तयोः परं जन्म उदाहरिष्ये ययोर्यथाकारणदेहधारिणोः।
अरूपिणो रूपविधारणं पुनर्मृणां महानुग्रह एव केवलम्।।23।।
tayoḥ paraṃ janma udāhariṣye yayoryathākāraṇadehadhāriṇoḥ /
arūpiṇo rūpavidhāraṇaṃ punarmṛṇāṃ mahānugraha eva kevalam //

I shall describe to you the reason why the supreme, transcendental Lord—here referring to both Śrī Rāma and Sītā—had taken a birth and assumed a gross body. He who is formless and attributeless had assumed a human form only for the good and welfare of humans (and other living creatures) on this earth (23).

पठन् द्विजोवागृषभत्वमीयात्क्षत्रान्वयो भूमिपतित्वमीयात्।
वणिग्जनोपण्यफलत्वमीयाच्छृण्वन्हि शूद्रोहि महत्त्वमीयात्।। 24।।
paṭhan dvijovāgṛṣabhatvamīyātkṣatrānvayo bhūmipatitvamīyāt /
vaṇigjanopaṇyaphalatvamīyācchṛṇvanhi śūdrohi mahattvamīyāt //

By reading it and reciting it, a Brāhmin (the senior most class in society who is supposed to be its moral guide, adviser and teacher) is blessed with the reward of fine oratory and possessing the powers of making a pleasant and sweet speech. A Kṣatriya (the warrior class in society who protects it) is rewarded with lordship over the realm. A Vaiśya (the trading and farming community designated with the job of providing comfort and daily needs of the other 3 classes) gets success in his trade and commercial activities. And a Śūdra (the class which is designated to serve other classes and free them from the tedious burden of daily chores and help them to concentrate on their designated jobs) gets importance and recognition in society (24).

Thus ends Canto 1 of the ancient and glorious epic story of Śrī Rāma and Sītā, called Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa, describing the divine greatness of the two, and establishing their divinity and non-dual supremacy over the rest of the creation.

* * *

Canto 2

King Ambarīṣa gets a boon from Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu)

King Triśaṃku was a king of Ayodhyā and his queen was Padmāvatī. She was a great devotee of Lord Viṣṇu. Once she had a dream that the Lord has given her a divine fruit, and she immediately ate it. Thus was born their son Ambarīṣa. Upon death of his father Triśaṃku, he ascended the throne of Ayodhyā and did severe Tapa (austerity, penance and keeping rigorous religious vows) which pleased Viṣṇu who granted him certain boons, especially the protection provided by the Lord's discus against enemies and even the curse of Brāhmins. Thus blessed and honoured by Viṣṇu, he returned and ruled over the kingdom with righteousness, probity and piety. His realm stretched as far as the land mass extended, up to the boarders of the ocean (i.e. he was an emperor). The land was prosperous, people were happy and religious, and the honourable king did hundreds of sacrifices.

भरद्वाज! शृणुष्वाथ रामचन्द्रस्य धीमतः। जन्मनः कारणं विप्र! इक्ष्वाकुकुलवारिधौ।।1।।
सीतायाश्च महादेव्याः पृथिव्यां जन्महेतुकम्। तत्र रामकथामादौ वक्ष्यामि मुनिपुङ्गव।।2।।

bharadvāja ! śṛṇuṣvātha rāmacandrasya dhīmataḥ /
janmanaḥ kāraṇaṃ vipra ! ikṣvākukulavāridhau //
sītāyāśca mahādevyāḥ pṛthivyāṃ janmahetukam /
tatra rāmakathāmādau vakṣyāmi munipuṅgava //

'Oh Brāhmin Bhāradvāja! Listen carefully to why and how the great Śrī Rāma Candra took birth in the great family with a lineage known as 'Ikṣvāku'. This royal family was very large and renowned like the ocean. [That is, it resembled an ocean in its vastness, fame and glory whereas all other existing royal families of the time were like seas.] (1)

I will also tell you why the great goddess Sītā took birth on this earth. Oh exalted sage! First of all, to start with, I shall narrate the story of Śrī Rāma (2). [1-2]

श्रूयतां मुनिशार्दूले अम्बरीषकथाश्रयम्। पुरुषोत्तममाहात्म्यं सर्वपापहरं परम्।।3।।

śrūyatāṃ muniśārdūle ambarīṣakathāśrayam /
puruṣottamamāhātmyaṃ sarvapāpaharaṃ param //

Oh sage, you are like a lion amidst sages (i.e. you are like a great king of the sages residing on the banks of river Tamasā) ! Listen to the story of Ambarīṣa. This fascinating narration has the potential to eliminate all the great sins and evils that torment a creature in this mortal world (3).

त्रिशंकोर्दयिता भार्या सर्वलक्षणशोभिता। अम्बरीषस्य जननी नित्यै शोचसमन्विता।।4।।

triśaṃkordayitā bhāryā sarvalakṣaṇaśobhitā /
ambarīṣasya jananī nityai śocasamanvitā //

The dear wife of king Triśaṃku possessed all the noble virtues and good characters that one should possess. She was the mother of Ambarīṣa and did the different religious sacraments (such as bathing, doing worship, performing religious rites, offering sacrifices, making charities) daily (4).

योगनिद्रां समारूढं शेषपर्यङ्कशायिनम्। नारायणं महात्मानं ब्रह्माण्डकमलोद्भवम्।। 5।।
तमसा कालरुद्राख्यं रजसा कनकाण्डजम्। सत्वेन सर्वगं विष्णुं सर्वदेवनमस्कृतम्।। 6।।

yoganidrāṃ samārūḍhaṃ śeṣaparyaṅkaśāyinam /
nārāyaṇaṃ mahātmānaṃ brahmāṇḍakamalodbhavam //
tamasā kālarudrākhyaṃ rajasā kanakāṇḍajam /
satvena sarvagaṃ viṣṇuṃ sarvadevanamaskṛtam //

Lord Nārāyaṇa—who reclines on the back of the coiled legendary python called Śeṣanātha (floating on the surface of the legendary celestial ocean of milk called Kṣīra sāgara) and stays in the blissful sleeping state obtained as a result of deep meditation (called Yoga-Nidrā)—is the progenitor of the entire cosmos(called Brahmāṇḍa) in his manifestation as the one who has his origin in the divine lotus (a reference to Brahmā who emerged form a lotus coming out of Virāṭ Puruṣa's navel) (5).

That Nārāyaṇa assumes or transforms himself into three forms based on the predominance of one of the three basic qualities or Guṇas, the Tama, Raja and Sat which are inherent to and integral part of all creation— (a) when he has 'Tamoguṇa' as a predominant characteristic, his form is known as 'Kālarudra' or Śiva, the annihilator; (b) when 'Rajoguṇa' is the dominant player, he is known as Brahmā, the creator; and (c) when 'Satoguṇa' is prominent, he is known as Viṣṇu, the sustainer. This last form of Viṣṇu is revered, honoured, adored and worshipped by all the Gods who bow and pay their obeisance to this glorious and honorable form of the Lord (6). [5-6]

[Note :—(1) There are four states of existence according to Vedānta in which a creature exists—(a) the waking state of consciousness called 'Jāgrata', (b) the dream state of consciousness called 'Svapna', (c) the deep sleep state of consciousness called 'Suṣupta', and (e) the blissful state of consciousness called 'Turīya'. There is a fifth state called 'Turīyātīta' which transcends the four state. 'Yoga-Nidrā' means 'a perpetual sleep obtained as a result of Yoga or meditation'. It is a constant trance—like state called 'Samādhi' and refers to the 3 till the 5 stages. In this state there is complete beatitude and felicity.

(2) The three qualities that determine the behaviour, temperament, tendencies, habits and inclinations of a creature are—(a) 'Sat' or the best, most righteous, virtuous, noble and exalted qualities. It is marked by mercy, compassion, spirituality, benevolence, magnanimity, munificence, grace, kindness, probity, propriety, noble thoughts and deeds. (b) 'Raja'—

this is a medium quality characterised by worldly passions and desires. (c) 'Tama'—this is the lowest quality marked by the tendency to commit sins, be evil and pervert, selfish and mean. Naturally therefore, those who possess 'Tama' in excess, cause strife and discord, leading to ill-will and animosity, warfare and death. The two latter qualities relate to expansionism and worldly gratifications. The 1st quality leads to spiritualism.]

अर्चयामास सततं वाङ्मनःकायवृत्तिभिः। माल्यदामादिकं सर्वं स्वयमेव व्यचीकरत्।। 7।।

arcayāmāsa satataṃ vāṅmanaḥkāyavṛttibhiḥ /
mālyadāmādikaṃ sarvaṃ svayameva vyacīkarat //

She regularly worshipped that Nārāyaṇa with great devotion in her mind and heart, by her deeds and actions as well as by her speech. She held a rosary in her hands and personally served the Lord (i.e. she did all the rituals of formal worship herself instead of asking her assistants do the formalities for her) (7).

[Note :—(i) Worshipping the Lord by 'mind and heart' refers to his constant remembrance, contemplation and meditation upon him, always keeping the mind pegged on his divine stories and deeds which he had done in one of his sojourns on this earth, and enshrining his divine form in one's heart with reverence and devotion. (ii) Worshipping the Lord by deeds and actions means, inter alia, doing righteous deeds, taking noble actions, having pleasant demeanours, making charities and showing compassion and mercy to others, besides the physical rituals involved in formal worship. (iii) Worship by speech involves singing prayers, repetition of holy Mantras (divine words), reading and reciting scriptures, preaching, talking kindly and amiably to others, singing the glories of the Lord using pleasing and sweet words, giving righteous and noble advice, etc]

गन्धादिपेषणश्चैव धूपद्रव्यादिकं तथा। तत्सर्वं कौतुकाविष्टा स्वयमेव चकार सा।।8।।

gandhādipeṣaṇaścaiva dhūpadravyādikaṃ tathā /
tatsarvaṃ kautukāviṣṭā svayameva cakāra sā //

Offering of fragrant incense, perfumes and delicious food to the Lord were done by her personally with due devotion, reverence and eagerness. She was diligent and active in these offerings, and she did them sportingly and cheerfully (8).

शुभा पद्मावती नित्यं वचो नारायणेति वै। अनन्तेति च सा नित्यं भाषमाणा यतव्रता।। 9।।

śubhā padmāvatī nityaṃ vaco nārāyaṇeti vai /
ananteti ca sā nityaṃ bhāṣamāṇā yatavratā //

That lady (wife of king Triśaṃku) named Padmāvatī was endowed with all the good and auspicious characters. She pronounced or repeated the holy name of the Lord most reverentially by saying 'Namo Nārāyaṇāya' (literally meaning 'Oh Lord Nārāyaṇa, I reverentially bow before you). Besides this, she also repeated or uttered the other eternal holy names of the Lord regularly on a daily basis (9).

[Note :—The word literally means 'to speak, to pronounce, to declare, to proclaim'. But it refers to the practice of doing 'Japa' or repetition of the holy name with the help of a rosary held in the hand. Lord Nārāyaṇa has a thousand names. Those names are listed in 'Viṣṇu Sahasranāma Stotra'. All these names indicate one or the other facets of the Lord's glories.]

दशवर्षसहस्राणि तत्परेणान्तरात्मना। अर्चयामास गोविन्दं गन्धपुष्पादिभिः शुभैः।। 10।।
daśavarṣasahasrāṇi tatpareṇāntarātmanā /
arcayāmāsa govindaṃ gandhapuṣpādibhiḥ śubhaiḥ //

She continued to worship and honour Govinda (one of the names of Viṣṇu) for ten thousand years by offering flowers and perfumes with due devotion, reverence and sincerity, with diligence and commitment (10).

विष्णुभक्तान्महाभागान् सर्वपापविवर्जितान्। दानमानार्चनैर्नित्यं धनै रत्नैरतोषयत्।। 11।।
viṣṇubhaktānmahābhāgān sarvapāpavivarjitān /
dānamānārcanairnityaṃ dhanai ratnairatoṣayat //

She used to give alms daily and keep the sinless devotes of Lord Viṣṇu contented and satisfied by giving them sufficient donations, showing due respect or honour to them, bestowing them with ample wealth and property, and liberally giving away gems and jewels etc. to them as largesse (11).

ततः कदाचित्सा देवी द्वादश्यां समु पोष्य वै। हरेरग्रे महाभागा सुष्वाप पतिना सह।। 12।।
tataḥ kadācitsā devī dvādaśyāṃ samu poṣya vai /
hareragre mahābhāgā suṣvāpa patinā saha //

Once she had kept a fast on the twelfth day of the lunar fortnight (called 'Dvādaśa'). On that auspicious day, that great lady slept with her husband in front of Hari (i.e. she slept in front of an image of Lord Viṣṇu whom she worshipped) (12).

तत्र नारायणो देवस्तामाह पुरुषोत्तमः। किमिच्छसि वरं भद्रे मत्तः किं ब्रूहि भामिनि।। 13।।
सा दृष्ट्वा तं वरं वव्रे पुत्रस्त्वद्भक्तिमान्भवेत्। सार्वभौमो महातेजाः स्वकर्मनिरतः शुचिः।। 14।।

tatra nārāyaṇo devastāmāha puruṣottamaḥ /
kimicchasi varaṃ bhadre mattaḥ kiṃ brūhi bhāmini //
sā dṛṣṭvā taṃ varaṃ vavre putrastvadbhaktimānbhavet /
sārvabhaumo mahātejāḥ svakarmaniratah śuciḥ //

Lord Nārāyaṇa, who is the most exalted amongst the Gods and the macrocosmic form of the Lord, called 'Puruṣa', said to her, 'Oh Lady! What boon or blessing do you wish to have?' (13). Seeing the Lord, she humbly submitted, 'Give me a son who is devoted to you, who would be an emperor, is endowed with great energy, strength, radiance, glory and majesty, is very diligent, sincere, steadfast and committed to his duties, and possesses purity of heart and mind ' (14). [13-14]

तथेत्युक्त्वा ददौ तस्यै फलमेकं जनार्दनः। सा प्रबुद्धा फलं दृष्ट्वा भर्त्रे सर्व निवेद्य च।। 15।।
भक्षयामास संहृष्टा फलं तद्गतमानसा। ततः कालेन सा देवी पुत्रं कुलविवर्द्धनम्।। 16।।
असूयत शुभाचारं वासुदेवपरायणम्। शुभलक्षणसम्पन्नं चक्राङ्कितमनुत्तमम्।। 17।।
tathetyuktvā dadau tasyai phalamekaṃ janārdanaḥ /
sā prabuddhā phalaṃ dṛṣṭvā bhartre sarva nivedya ca //
bhakṣayāmāsa saṃhṛṣṭā phalaṃ tadgatamānasā /
tataḥ kālena sā devī putraṃ kulavivarddhanam //
asūyata śubhācāraṃ vāsudevaparāyaṇam /
śubhalakṣaṇasampannaṃ cakrāṅkitamanuttamam //

When she made this request, Janārdana (one of the names of Viṣṇu; one who is compassionate and benevolent towards his followers) gave her a fruit (in her dream). Seeing the fruit (in her dreams), she woke up with a start and told the entire episode to her husband (15).

She then ate that fruit with great devotion and reverence. Consequentially, when the proper time approached, she gave birth to a son who would increase the fame and glory of the clan. In due course of time (16), that child exhibited all the good and auspicious characteristics, was devoted to Vāsudeva (Lord Viṣṇu), possessed auspicious, noble and virtuous qualities, and had divine marks on the body, such as the sign of 'Cakra' (the discus held by Lord Viṣṇu). In short, he was an excellent child possessing immaculate qualities and virtues (17). [15-17]

जातं दृष्ट्वा पिता पुत्रं क्रियाः सर्वाश्चकार वै। अम्बरीष इति ख्यातो लोके समभवत्प्रभुः।। 18।।
jātaṃ dṛṣṭvā pitā putraṃ kriyāḥ sarvāścakāra vai /
ambarīṣa iti khyāto loke samabhavatprabhuḥ //

Seeing that a son has been born, his father (Triśaṃku) did all the required sacraments and rituals needed to be done at the time of a child's birth. The son later on became renowned in the world by the name of Ambarīṣa (18).

पितर्युपरते श्रीमानभिषिक्तोमहात्मभिः। मंत्रिष्वाधाय राज्यं च तप उग्रं चकार सः।। 19।।
संवत्सर सहस्त्रं वै जगन्नारायणं प्रभुम्। हृत्पुण्डरीकमध्यस्थं सूर्यमण्डलमध्यगम्।। 20।।

pitaryuparate śrīmānabhiṣiktomahātmabhiḥ /
maṃtriṣvādhāya rājyaṃ ca tapa ugraṃ cakāra saḥ //
saṃvatsara sahasraṃ vai jagannārāyaṇaṃ prabhum /
hṛtpuṇḍarīkamadhyasthaṃ sūryamaṇḍalamadhyagam //

When his father died, that gentleman son ascended the throne. He handed over the charge of the day-to-day administration of the kingdom to his ministers and went to do severe Tapa (austerity, penance, meditation, keeping stern vows such as fasting etc.) (19).

For 1,000 Saṃvatsaras (1 Saṃvatsara = 1 year), he repeated the holy name of (or contemplated and meditated upon) the Lord of the universe (known as 'Jagat Nārāyaṇa') present in the centre of his lotus-like heart. The lord was splendorous, radiant and dazzling like the core of the sun (20). [19-20]

शंखचक्रगदापद्मं धारयन्तं चतुर्भुजम्। शुद्धजाम्बूनदनिभं ब्रह्मविष्णुशिवात्मकम्।। 21।।
सर्वाभरणसंयुक्तं पीताम्बरधरं प्रभुम्। श्रीवत्सवक्षसं देवं पुरुषं पुरुषोत्तमम्।। 22।।
ततो गरुडमारुह्य सर्वदेवैरभिष्टुतः। आजगाम स विश्वात्मा सर्वलोकनमस्कृतः।। 23।।
ऐरावतमिवाचिन्त्य कृत्वा वै गरुडं हरिः। स्वयं शक्र इवासीनस्तमाह नृपसत्तमम्।। 24।।

śaṃkhacakragadāpadmaṃ dhārayantaṃ caturbhujam /
śuddhajāmbūnadanibhaṃ brahmaviṣṇuśivātmakam //
sarvābharaṇasaṃyuktaṃ pītāmbaradharaṃ prabhum /
śrīvatsavakṣasaṃ devaṃ puruṣaṃ puruṣottamam //
tato garuḍamāruhya sarvadevairabhiṣṭutaḥ /
ājagāma sa viśvātmā sarvalokanamaskṛtaḥ //
airāvatamivācintya kṛtvā vai garuḍaṃ hariḥ /
svayaṃ śakra ivāsīnastamāha nṛpasattamam //

The Lord who holds the conch, the discus, the mace and the lotus in his four hands, whose countenance is radiant like pure gold, who embodies in himself all the three gods of the Trinity, i.e. Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva (21), who was adorned with all the ornaments, who wears a

'Pītāmbara' (a seamless golden coloured, silk, body-wrapping cloth) and is a Lord of all, who has the mark called 'Śrīvatsa' on his chest, who is the God of all humans as well as the most exalted macrocosmic Male aspect of Nature who is the Lord of all other Gods (22), who rides the legendary mount called Garuḍa (the eagle, heron bird), who is worshipped and adored by all the Gods, and who is the macrocosmic Soul of the cosmos before whom the whole world bows to pay its obeisance (23)—that supreme, transcendental Lord called Hari appeared before the exalted king in the form of, or disguised as Indra (the king of Gods) sitting astride his elephant called Airāvata, who was actually Garuḍa in the disguise of an elephant (24). [21-24]

[Note :—(i) The legend behind this mark called Śrīvatsa on the chest of Viṣṇu is this—once sage Bhṛgu went to Viṣṇu who was reclining on the bed formed by the coiled Śeṣanātha, and goddess Lakṣmī was serving his divine feet. Viṣṇu did not get up to welcome and show respect to the sage by bowing before him, which made the sage peeved, and he was so angry that he kicked the Lord on his chest. The merciful Lord did not take umbrage at this outrageous act of the sage, but rather blessed him. However, Lakṣmī cursed the sage that henceforth wealth and prosperity would elude/evade Brāhmins. That footprint of sage Bhṛgu is called 'Śrīvatsa'. (ii) Indra is called 'Śakra' which is a deformed version of the word 'Śukra' which refers to the male sperm. This word is used to describe Indra because of his lustful, lascivious and promiscuous character].

इन्द्रोऽहमस्मि भद्रं ते किं ददामि तवाद्य वै। सर्वलोकेश्वरोऽहं त्वां रक्षितुं समुपागतः।। 25।।

indro'hamasmi bhadraṃ te kiṃ dadāmi tavādya vai/
sarvalokeśvaro'haṃ tvāṃ rakṣituṃ samupāgataḥ//

Lord Nārāyaṇa, who had taken the form of Indra, said to the king, 'Oh King! I am Indra; what shall I give you? I am the lord of all the Lokas (worlds), and I have come to you to give you protection' (25).

अम्बरीषस्तु तं दृष्ट्वा शक्रमैरावतस्थितम्। उवाच वचनं धीमान् विष्णुभक्तिपरायणः।। 26।।
नाहं त्वामभिसन्धाय तप आतिष्ठवानिह। त्वया दत्तश्च नेच्छामि गच्छ शक्र यथासुखम्।। 27।।
मम नारायणो नाथस्त्वां नस्तोष्येऽमराधिप!। व्रजेन्द्र मा कृथास्त्वत्र ममाश्रमविलोपनम्।। 28।।

ambarīṣastu taṃ dṛṣṭvā śakramairāvatasthitam/
uvāca vacanaṃ dhīmān viṣṇubhaktiparāyaṇaḥ//
nāhaṃ tvāmabhisandhāya tapa ātiṣṭhavāniha/
tvayā dattaśca necchāmi gaccha śakra yathāsukham//
mama nārāyaṇo nāthastvāṃ nastoṣye'marādhipa !/
vrajendra mā kṛthāstvatra mamāśramavilopanam//

When Ambarīṣa, who was a sincere devotee of Viṣṇu, saw Indra sitting on his Airāvata elephant, he said, 'I have not done such severe Tapa for you (or to have your divine view). I have no desire to have anything that you wish to give (to me as a boon or blessing). So, Oh Indra, please go away happily from here (27).

My Lord is Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu). Oh the king of the immortals (or Gods—)! I do not want anything from you, so you may kindly go away from here. Do not waste your time in my hermitage' (28) [26-28].

ततः प्रहस्य भगवान् स्वरूपमकरोद्धरिः। शार्ङ्ग-चक्र-गदा-पाणिः शङ्खहस्तो जनार्दनः।। 29।।
गरुडोपरि विश्वात्मा नीलाचल इवापराः। देवगन्धर्वसंघैश्च स्तूयमानः समन्ततः।। 30।।
प्रणम्य राजा सन्तुष्टस्तुष्टाव गरुडध्वजम्।। 30½।।

tataḥ prahasya bhagavān svarūpamakaroddhariḥ /
śārṅga-cakra-gadā-pāṇiḥ śaṅkhahasto janārdanaḥ //
garuḍopari viśvātmā nīlācala ivāparāḥ /
devagandharvasaṃghaiśca stūyamānaḥ samantataḥ //
praṇamya rājā santuṣṭastuṣṭāva garuḍadhvajam /

The Lord laughed and revealed his true identity (form) as Janārdana (one of the names of Viṣṇu) who held the bow called 'Śārṅga', besides holding a discus, a mace, a lotus and a conch in his hands (29). He, who is the soul of the whole universe (i.e. who uniformally pervades in the entire creation and injects life into it as its truthful identity), was astride his legendry mount, the Garuḍa (the legendary eagle, heron bird), and was like a second majestic mountain having a bluish hue, a mountain called 'Nīlāñcala'. He was being worshipped and his glories were being sung by all the Gods and Gandharvas (celestial musicians) in chorus (30).

Seeing the Lord, the king reverentially bowed before him and began to laud and praise him who has a standard (flag) marked by the insignia of the Garuḍa on it (30½). [29-30½]

प्रसीद लोकनाथस्त्वं मम नाथ जनार्दनः।। 31।।
कृष्ण कृष्ण जगन्नाथ सर्वलोकनमस्कृत। त्वमादिस्त्वमनादिस्त्वमनन्तः च पुरुषः प्रभुः।। 32।।

prasīda lokanāthastvaṃ mama nātha janārdanaḥ //
kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa jagannātha sarvalokanamaskṛta /
tvamādistvamanādistvamanantaḥ ca puruṣaḥ prabhuḥ //

'Oh Janārdana! Be pleased with me, Oh Lord who is benevolent, merciful, gracious, kind, magnanimous and beneficent towards his followers. You are my Lord as well as the Lord of the Universe. Oh Kṛṣṇa (dark complexioned Lord)! The entire world pays its obeisance to you and bows before you. You are the macrocosmic primordial/primary Puruṣa (or the first Male, or the male aspect of Nature); you are the supreme, transcendental Lord who was present in the beginning, nay, who was present even before the beginning of creation, who is most ancient and has no end (32). [31-32]

[Note :—The words Janārdana and Kṛṣṇa are usually used for Lord Viṣṇu because he is merciful and benevolent towards his devotees (Janārdana) and is dark complexioned like the dark blue (azure) colour of the sky (Kṛṣṇa).]

अप्रमेयो विभुर्विष्णुर्गोविन्दः कमलेक्षणः। महेश्वरांशजो मध्यः पुष्करः खगमः खगः।। 33।।
कव्यवाहः कपाली त्वं हव्यवाहः प्रभञ्जनः। आदिदेवः क्रियानन्दः परमात्मनि संस्थितः।। 34।।

aprameyo vibhurviṣṇurgovindaḥ kamalekṣaṇaḥ /
maheśvarāṃśajo madhyaḥ puṣkaraḥ khagamaḥ khagaḥ //
kavyavāhaḥ kapālī tvaṃ havyavāhaḥ prabhañjanaḥ /
ādidevaḥ kriyānandaḥ paramātmani saṃsthitaḥ //

You are 'Aprameya' (one who is limitless, boundless, endless, measureless, without parameters) and 'Vibho' (omnipotent, almighty, omnipresent, all-pervading, eternal, magnanimous and majestic Lord). You are known as Viṣṇu as well as Govinda. You have lotus eyes. Lord Maheśa (Śiva) has been created from one of your fractions (i.e. Śiva is but only a fraction of your whole self—). You are the central core of the essence of Puṣkara. You are like the (vast, fathomless, measureless, endless) sky in which the birds, the clouds, the stars, the wind, the sun, the moon and the Gods are present (and still can't find an end of it) (33).

You are the one to whom the offerings made to ancestors are actually offered. You are the one who roams in the cemetery or the cremation ground with a hollowed-out upturned skull in your hand (i.e. you are Lord Śiva who is the patron God of the cremation ground). You are the one who accepts all the food offerings that are made to the fire sacrifice. You are the annihilator or concluder of the world (or, you are the one who brings this chapter of the creation to a close). You are the Lord who was present in the very beginning of creation. You are the one who performs all deeds cheerfully as if they were mere sports or playful activities. You are the one who is the Supreme Soul of the creation in whom everything that exists is established, is based and founded upon (34). [33-34]

[Note :—[1](i) The word 'Puṣkara' has many connotations, such as a lotus, a water body (e.g. a pond), water, sun, sky, snake, a part or a fraction, a stork or crane, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Buddha (an enlightened one), and the tip of an elephant's trunk. The word 'Madhya' means center, middle. So, the combined word refers to—(a) the core or the thalamus of the lotus flower were the nectar is stored; (b) the core of the splendorous sun where, according to the various Upaniṣads, the supreme Puruṣa is said to be established; (c) Viṣṇu, because he is the 'middle of the 3 Trinity Gods' consisting of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva; (d) 'Buddha', because he is enlightened and consciousness personified.

[2](ii) The word 'Khaga' means a bird, cloud, star, sun, moon, wind and the Gods. By using this single word 'Khaga', sage Vālmīki has deftly covered all these entities in one go. We must note that all these are present in the sky. Some have subtle, invisible and all-pervading form—like the wind, while some are spread across the sky—like the cloud, some are dazzling in their splendour and light up the world besides nourishing and sustaining the creation—like the sun; some are soothing and uplifting for an agitated mind—such as the moon; some are ordinary creatures having a definitive form having a birth, a life cycle and death—such as the birds; some are infinitely far away and twinkle against the dark black canopy of the night sky, representing so many hopes and aspirations of a creature against the backdrop of illusions, delusions and ignorance symbolised by the darkness of the night. All these characteristics are found in Viṣṇu. So he is likened to a 'Khaga'.

[3](iii) Though he is a sustainer of the world, but by calling him 'Kapālī', the sage wishes to emphasise that there is no difference between Viṣṇu and Śiva. In fact the word 'Maheśavarañjaso' in verse number 33 is a clear indication of this view.]

त्वां प्रपन्नोऽस्मि गोविन्द पाहि मां पुष्करेक्षण। नान्या गतिस्त्वदन्या मे त्वामेव शरणं गतः ।। 35 ।।

tvāṃ prapanno'smi govinda pāhi māṃ puṣkarekṣaṇa /
nānyā gatistvadanyā me tvāmeva śaraṇaṃ gataḥ //

Oh Govinda! I take the shelter of your (divine, holy and august) feet. Oh the one with lotus eyes! Protect me, save me. I have no succour, no solace and no refuge anywhere except with you. I have come to take refuge with you' (35).

तमाह भगवान्विष्णुः किं ते हृदि चिकीर्षितम्। तत्सर्वं सम्प्रदास्यामि भक्तोऽसि मम सुव्रत।। 36।।
भक्तप्रियोऽस्मि सततं तस्माद्दातुमिहागतः।। 36½।।

tamāha bhagavānviṣṇuḥ kiṃ te hṛdi cikīrṣitam/
tatsarvaṃ sampradāsyāmi bhakto'si mama suvrata//
bhaktapriyo'smi satataṃ tasmāddātumihāgataḥ/

Then Lord Viṣṇu asked him, 'Oh the one who keeps righteous vows ! What is your wish or desire? You are my devotee; I shall give you everything that you wish to have. I am always benevolent, munificent and magnanimous towards my devotees. That is why I have come to give you any fruit or reward that you may wish to have' (36-36½).

अम्बरीषस्तु तत् श्रुत्वा हर्षगद्गदया गिरा।। 37।।
प्रोवाच परमात्मानं नारायणमनामयम्। त्वयि विष्णौ परानन्दे नित्यं मे वर्त्ततां मतिः।। 38।।
भवेयं त्वत्परोनित्यं वाङ्मनः कायकर्मभिः। पालयिष्यामि पृथिवीं कृत्वा वै वैष्णवं जगत्।। 39।।
यज्ञहोमार्चनैश्चैव तर्पिष्यामि सुरोत्तमान्। वैष्णवान् पालयिष्यामि हनिष्यामि च शात्रवान्।। 40।।

ambarīṣastu tat śrutvā harṣagadgadayā girā//
provāca paramātmānaṃ nārāyaṇamanāmayam/
tvayi viṣṇau parānande nityaṃ me varttatāṃ matiḥ//
bhaveyaṃ tvatparonityaṃ vāṅmanaḥ kāyakarmabhiḥ/
pālayiṣyāmi pṛthivīṃ kṛtvā vai vaiṣṇavaṃ jagat//
yajñahomārcanaiścaiva tarpiṣyāmi surottamān/
vaiṣṇavān pālayiṣyāmi haniṣyāmi ca śātravān//

Hearing that he is being addressed as a devotee of the Lord, Ambarīṣa was overwhelmed with joy and happiness. He said to the supreme, transcendental Lord (or Parmātmā) who is faultless and immaculate (Anāmaya) (37½), 'Oh Viṣṇu who is eternally blissful. Let me have constant devotion in you (38).

I shall worship and serve you very sincerely with my mind and heart, with my speech, my deeds and actions. I would look after the earth (i.e. the realm) with diligence and commitment, and ensure that it (i.e. its inhabitants) become great devotees of Viṣṇu (39).

I shall satisfy the Gods by doing various fire sacrifices, observing different religious rituals and doing many other types of worships and offering of prayers. I shall take care of those who are 'Vaiṣṇavas' (i.e. those who are the followers of Lord Viṣṇu), and I shall vanquish the enemies (or the opponents) of Viṣṇu and his devotees, i.e. the 'Asuras' (40). [37-40]

एवमुक्तस्तु भगवान् प्रत्युवाच नृपोत्तमम्। एवमस्तु तवेच्छा वै चक्रमेतत्सुदर्शनम्।।41।।
पुरा रुद्रप्रभावेन लब्धं वै दुर्लभं मया। ऋषिशापादिकं दुःखं शत्रु रोगादिकं तथा।।42।।
निहनिष्यति ते दुःखमित्युक्त्वान्तरधीयत।।42½।।

evamuktastu bhagavān pratyuvāca nṛpottamam /
evamastu tavecchā vai cakrametatsudarśanam //
purā rudraprabhāvena labdhaṃ vai durlabhaṃ mayā /
ṛṣiśāpādikaṃ duḥkhaṃ śatru rogādikaṃ tathā //
nihaniṣyati te duḥkhamityuktvāntaradhīyata //

When the exalted King made the above submission (or promise), the Lord (Bhagavān) replied to him, 'It shall be as you say. Your desires would be fulfilled. This discus of mine, called 'Cakra Sudarśana' (41), which I have got as a gracious gesture (a gift) from Rudra (Śiva) and which is as majestic, powerful, potent, influential and effective as the wrath of Rudra himself, and is a very rare and unique weapon, will destroy and overcome all your torments; it shall protect you against the curses of sages and saints, from all types of sorrows, miseries, anguish and grief, from your enemies and other troubles such as different diseases and illnesses that would ever afflict you'. Saying this, he (Viṣṇu) became invisible (i.e. he vanished from sight from there) (42½). [41-42½]

ततः प्रणम्य मुदितो राजा नारायणं प्रभुम्।।43।।
प्रविश्य नगरीं दिव्यामयोध्यां पर्यपालयत्। ब्राह्मणादींस्तथा वर्णान् स्वे स्वे कर्मण्ययोजयत्।।44।।

tataḥ praṇamya mudito rājā nārāyaṇaṃ prabhum //
praviśya nagarīṃ divyāmayodhyāṃ paryapālayat /
brāhmaṇādīṃstathā varṇān sve sve karmaṇyayojayat //

Then the king cheerfully bowed before Lord Nārāyaṇa (43) and entered (or came back) to the divine, majestic, magnificent and glorious city of Ayodhyā. He began to rule over it. He ordained (or decreed) that all the classes of society, such as the Brāhmins and others, should pursue their respective vocations diligently and righteously (44). [43-44]

नारायणपरो नित्यं विष्णु भक्तानकल्मषान्। पालयामास हृष्टात्मा विशेषेण जनाधिपः।।45।।

nārāyaṇaparo nityaṃ viṣṇu bhaktānakalmaṣān /
pālayāmāsa hṛṣṭātmā viśeṣeṇa janādhipaḥ //

The king was persistently and consistently devoted to Lord Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu). He looked after his subjects well with special attention for the devotees of Viṣṇu (45).

अश्वमेधशतैरिष्ट्वा वाजपेयशतानि च। पालयामास पृथिवीं सागरावरणामिमाम्।। 46।।

aśvamedhaśatairiṣṭvā vājapeyaśatāni ca /
pālayāmāsa pṛthivīṃ sāgarāvaraṇāmimām //

He did a hundred 'Aśvamedha Yajñas' (the horse sacrifices) and a hundred 'Vājapeya Yajñas'. He took care of the land extending up to the ocean (46).

[Note :—(i) A horse sacrifice was one in which a consecrated horse was let loose, and it was followed by a huge army. The horse roamed about freely, and the territory over which it went was annexed, either peacefully by a treaty or by waging a war. When the horse returned, it was slaughtered as a sacrificial animal and offered to the fire sacrifice. The king then declared himself an emperor. (ii) The Vājapeya Yajña was done for long periods of time. The main text used for the purpose was the Yajurveda. Those special category of Brāhmins (priests) who specialised in this sacrifice were called 'Vājapeya'.]

गृहे गृहे हरिस्तस्थौ वेदघोषो गृहे गृहे। नामघोषो हरेश्चैव यज्ञघोषस्तथैव च।। 47।।

gṛhe gṛhe haristasthau vedaghoṣo gṛhe gṛhe /
nāmaghoṣo hareścaiva yajñaghoṣastathaiva ca //

During that time, Lord Hari was established (i.e. his image was consecrated) in every household of the city; the hymns of the Vedas reverberated in each household; the divine name of Hari was chanted aloud and echoed in each of them, and so was the loud noise made during formal religious sacrifices (47).

[Note :—Each household of the kingdom performed their own little ritual and sacrifice on individual basis in addition to the one organised by the king which was on a large scale, for it was a state organised ceremony. In short, the verse implies that all the people of the kingdom were religious in their outlook; all of them performed their religious duties diligently as ordained by the scriptures and tradition prevalent in those times. Piety, devotion, dedication, religious fervour and righteousness were the dominant features everywhere.]

अभवन्नृपशार्दूले तस्मिन् राज्यं प्रशासति। नासस्या नातृणा भूमिर्न दुर्भिक्षादिभिर्युता।। 48।।
रोगहीना प्रजा नित्यं सर्वोपद्रववर्जिता।। 48½।।

abhavannṛpaśārdūle tasmin rājyaṃ praśāsati /
nāsasyā nātṛṇā bhūmirna durbhikṣādibhiryutā //
rogahīnā prajā nityaṃ sarvopadravavarjitā /

These types of activities were a common feature or a regular practice in the kingdom of the great emperor-king, who was like a lion amongst kings. The earth was full of grass (such as herbs, vegetables, plants, trees, creepers) as well as well provided with food (such as cereals, pulses, vegetables, fruits). There was no trace or hint of famine or drought (48). The king's subjects were free from diseases as well as all other kinds of troubles and torments (48). [48-48]

अम्बरीषो महातेजाः पालयामास मेदिनीम्।।49।।
स वै महात्मा सततं च रक्षितः सुदर्शनेन प्रियदर्शनेन।
शुभां समुद्रावधिसन्ततां महीं सुपालयामास महीमहेन्द्रः।।50।।

ambarīṣo mahātejāḥ pālayāmāsa medinīm //
sa vai mahātmā satataṃ ca rakṣitaḥ sudarśanena priyadarśanena /
śubhāṃ samudrāvadhisantatāṃ mahīṃ supālayāmāsa mahīmahendraḥ //

In this way, the most glorious and majestic king Ambarīṣa sustained and took care of his realm (49). Protected by the Sudarśana Cakra (the discus of Lord Viṣṇu which was given to him as described in verse no. 41-42), he took good care of the earth (his territory) that extended up to the four oceans (or which was surrounded on all the sides by the four oceans. That is, the realm of king Ambarīṣa covered the whole land mass known at that time) (50). [49-50]

Thus ends canto 2 of the ancient epic called Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa composed by sage Vālmīki describing the story of king Ambarīṣa and his getting boons from lord Viṣṇu.

* * *

Canto 3

The episode of sages Nārada and Parvata desiring to marry king Ambarīṣa's daughter

Sages Nārada and Parvata came to visit king Ambarīṣa and were so enchanted and infatuated by the beauty of his marriageable daughter Śrīmatī that both the sages wished to marry her. The king was in a quandary and became utterly stunned and dumfounded, not knowing what to do. He decided to let the girl choose her groom. The two sages hurried to their patron God, Lord Viṣṇu, separately and expressed their desire to marry the same girl. In their enthusiasm to preempt the chance of the girl taking a liking to his competitor, each of them asked Lord Viṣṇu to make his opponent look like a monkey to deter the girl from choosing him. Getting an assurance from the Lord 'that he will do what is good for them', they hurried back to Ayodhyā to participate in the marriage ceremony wherein the girl would have the freedom to select her own groom.

तस्यैवं वर्त्तमानस्य कन्या कमललोचना। श्रीमती नाम विख्याता सर्वलक्षणशोभिता।। 1।।

tasyaivaṃ vartamānasya kanyā kamalalocanā /
śrīmatī nāma vikhyātā sarvalakṣaṇaśobhitā //

Presently, he (king Ambarīṣa) was blessed with a girl child named Śrīmatī who was lotus-eyed (i.e. very beautiful and attractive) and was famous for her virtues and noble characters (1).

प्रदानसमयं प्राप्ता देवमायेव शोभना। तस्मिन्काले मुनिः श्रीमान् नारदोऽभ्यागतोगृहम्।। 2।।
अम्बरीषस्य राज्ञो वै पर्वतश्च महाद्युतिः।। 2½।।

pradānasamayaṃ prāptā devamāyeva śobhanā /
tasminkāle muniḥ śrīmān nārado'bhyāgatogṛham //
ambarīṣasya rājño vai parvataśca mahādyutiḥ /

By the time she was mature and ready for giving away in marriage, she was adorned with a divine beauty befitting Gods (or she resembled a Goddess in her beauty and charm). In one of those days, sage Nārada came to the place of Ambarīṣa (2). He was accompanied by the glorious sage named Parvata who was radiant like electric (2½). [2-2½]

तावुभावागतौ दृष्ट्वा प्रणिपत्य यथाविधि।। 3।।
अम्बरीषो महातेजाः पूजयामास तावृषी।। 3½।।

tāvubhāvāgatau dṛṣṭvā praṇipatya yathāvidhi //
ambarīṣo mahātejāḥ pūjayāmāsa tāvṛṣī /

Seeing that the two sages have arrived at his palace, the most radiant, majestic and glorious king Ambarīṣa welcomed them reverentially and worshipped them with due honour (3-3½).

कन्यां तां प्रेक्ष्य भगवान् नारदः प्राह विस्मितः।। 4।।
केयं राजन् महाभागा कन्या सुरसुतोपमा। ब्रूहि धर्मभूतां श्रेष्ठ सर्वलक्षणशोभिता।। 5।।

kanyāṃ tāṃ prekṣya bhagavān nāradaḥ prāha vismitaḥ //
keyaṃ rājan mahābhāgā kanyā surasutopamā /
brūhi dharmabhūtāṃ śreṣṭha sarvalakṣaṇaśobhitā //

Seeing that girl, Lord Nārada was amazed by her beauty and became infatuated with her. He asked the king, 'Say oh righteous king, whose is this daughter who is like a daughter of some God and is endowed with all the excellent qualities and virtues that one can ever expect to posses' [4-5].

निशम्य वचनं तस्य राजा प्राह कृताञ्जलिः। दुहितेयं मम विभो श्रीमती नाम नामतः ।। 6 ।।
प्रदानसमयं प्राप्ता वरमन्विषती शुभा ।। 6½ ।।

niśamya vacanaṃ tasya rājā prāha kṛtāñjaliḥ /
duhiteyaṃ mama vibho śrīmatī nāma nāmataḥ //
pradānasamayaṃ prāptā varamanviṣatī śubhā /

Hearing these words of the sage, the king replied with joined hands, 'This girl named Śrīmatī is my daughter. She has attained maturity and is searching for an appropriate groom to marry her' [6-6½].

इत्युक्तोमुनिशार्दूलस्तामिच्छन्नारदो द्विजः ।। 7 ।।
पर्वतोऽपि मुनिस्तां वै चक्रमे सर्षिसत्तमः ।। 7½ ।।

ityuktomuniśārdūlastāmicchannārado dvijaḥ //
parvato'pi munistāṃ vai cakrame sarṣisattamaḥ /

When the king said so, the exalted sage (or the sage who was like a lion or a king amongst sages—i.e. Nārada) desired to have her (Śrīmatī, i.e. wished to marry her). Similarly, the sage named Parvata also wished to have her hands in marriage simultaneously [7-7½].

अनुज्ञाप्य च राजानं नारदो वाक्यमब्रवीत् ।। 8 ।।
रहस्याहूय धर्म्मात्मा मम देहि सुतामिमाम्। पर्वतोऽपि तथा प्राह राजानं रहसि प्रभुम् ।। 9 ।।

anujñāpya ca rājānaṃ nārado vākyamabravīt //
rahasyāhūya dharmmātmā mama dehi sutāmimām /
parvato'pi tathā prāha rājānaṃ rahasi prabhum //

Nārada expressed his secret desire to the king and said, 'Oh the righteous one ! Give your daughter to me in marriage'. Similarly, Parvata also told the king the same thing (that he wished to marry his daughter) [8-9].

तावुभौ प्राह धर्म्मात्मा प्रणिपत्य भयार्दितः। उभौ भवन्तौ कन्यां मे प्रार्थमानौ कथं त्वहम्।। 10।।
करिष्यामि महाप्राज्ञो शृणु नारद मे वचः। त्वश्च पर्वत मे वाक्यं शृणु वक्ष्यामि यत्प्रभो।। 11।।
कन्येयं युवयोरेकं वरयिष्यति चेत् शुभा। तस्मै कन्यां प्रयच्छामि नान्यथा शक्तिरस्ति मे।। 12।।

tāvubhau prāha dharmmātmā praṇipatya bhayārditaḥ /
ubhau bhavantau kanyāṃ me prārthamānau kathaṃ tvaham //
kariṣyāmi mahāprājño śṛṇu nārada me vacaḥ /
tvaśca parvata me vākyaṃ śṛṇu vakṣyāmi yatprabho //
kanyeyaṃ yuvayorekaṃ varayiṣyati cet śubhā /
tasmai kanyāṃ prayacchāmi nānyathā śaktirasti me //

When both of them said the same thing, the king was aghast and terrified. He pleaded, 'Both of you pray to me to have the girl (10). In such a situation, oh Nārada and oh Parvata, how can I fulfill you desire? Hence, listen to what I have to say (11). Let the girl choose any one of you herself, and I shall give her to anyone of you whom she selects. Otherwise, I do not have the power or strength in me to give her to any one of you myself' (12). [10-12]

तथेत्युक्त्वा तु तौ विप्रौ श्व आयास्याव एवहि। इत्युक्त्वा मुनिशार्दूलौ जग्मतुः प्रीतमानसौ।। 13।।
वासुदेवपरो नित्यमुभौ ज्ञानवतां वरौ।। 13½।।

tathetyuktvā tu tau viprau śva āyāsyāva evahi /
ityuktvā muniśārdūlau jagmatuḥ prītamānasau !/
vāsudevaparo nityamubhau jñānavatāṃ varau /

Saying 'alright', the two great sages promised to comeback the next day and they went away. Both of them were very wise and erudite amongst their peers, and both of them were diligent followers of Vāsudeva (Viṣṇu) [13-13½].

विष्णुलोकं ततोगत्वा नारदोमुनिसत्तमः।। 14।।
प्रणिपत्य हृषीकेशं वाक्यमेतदुवाच ह। वृत्तान्तश्च निवेद्याग्रे नाथ नारायणव्यय।। 15।।
रहसि त्वां प्रवक्ष्यामि नमस्ते भुवनेश्वर।। 15½।।

viṣṇulokaṃ tatogatvā nāradomunisattamaḥ //
praṇipatya hṛṣīkeśaṃ vākyametaduvāca ha /
vṛttāntaśca nivedyāgre nātha nārāyaṇavyaya //
rahasi tvāṃ pravakṣyāmi namaste bhuvaneśvara /

The most exalted sage Nārada went to the Viṣṇu Loka, the divine abode of Lord Viṣṇu in the heaven, and reverentially prostrated before

Hṛṣīkeśa (one of the names of Viṣṇu) (14½). He narrated the entire episode to Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu) and said, 'Oh Lord Nārāyaṇa who is imperishable and eternal, oh Lord of the universe, I want to say something to you privately. I most reverentially bow before you' (15½). [14-15½]

ततः प्रहस्य गोविन्दः सर्वात्मा कर्मठं मुनिम्।। 16 ।।
ब्रहीत्याह स विश्वात्मा मुनिराह च केशवम्। त्वदीयोनृपतिः श्रीमानम्बरीषो महामतिः ।। 17 ।।
तस्य कन्या विशालाक्षी श्रीमती नाम नामतः। परिणेतुमहं तां वै इच्छामि वचनं शृणु।। 18 ।।
पर्वतोयं मुनिः श्रीमान् तव भृत्यस्तपोनिधिः। तामैछत्सोऽपि भगवन्स्तमाह जनाधिपः ।। 19 ।।
अम्बरीषो महातेजाः कन्येयं युवयोर्वरम्। लावण्ययुक्तं वृणुयात् यदि तस्मै ददाम्यहम्।। 20 ।।

tataḥ prahasya govindaḥ sarvātmā karmaṭhaṃ munim //
brahītyāha sa viśvātmā munirāha ca keśavam /
tvadīyonṛpatiḥ śrīmānambarīṣo mahāmatiḥ //
tasya kanyā viśālākṣī śrīmatī nāma nāmataḥ /
pariṇetumahaṃ tāṃ vai icchāmi vacanaṃ śṛṇu //
parvatoyaṃ muniḥ śrīmān tava bhṛtyastaponidhiḥ /
tāmaichatso'pi bhagavanstamāha janādhipaḥ //
ambarīṣo mahātejāḥ kanyeyaṃ yuvayorvaram /
lāvaṇyayuktaṃ vṛṇuyāt yadi tasmai dadāmyaham //

Govinda (Viṣṇu), who is the all pervading and immanent Ātmā of the entire creation, said to the sage who was steadfast and diligent in his pursuits (i.e. he was very committed to fulfill his wishes) (16)—'Say'. Then the sage said to that universal soul called Keśava (Viṣṇu), 'The great gentleman king Ambrīṣa is your ardent devotee (17). He has a beautiful daughter with large lotus-like eyes, named Śrīmatī. I want to marry her. Please listen to me (and oblige me) (18). Sage Parvata is also your devotee and he is a treasury of Tapa (i.e. he possesses all the majestic powers that come by doing severe penances, austerities and observing stern religious vows). He also desires to marry her. The devotee king of the realm (19), the most glorious and radiant Ambarīṣa has said that he will give the girl (i.e. his daughter Śrīmatī) to anyone to whom she is attracted and takes fancy to by the virtue of his personal charm and majesty (or his own beauty and manly attractiveness) (20). [16-20]

इत्याहावां नृपस्तत्र तथेत्युक्त्वाप्यहं ततः। आगमिष्यामि ते राजन् श्वः प्रभाते गृहं प्रति।। 21 ।।
आगतोहं जगन्नाथ कर्तुमर्हसि मे प्रियम्। वानराननवत् भाति पर्वतस्य मुखं यथा।। 22 ।।

तथा कुरु जगन्नाथ मम चेदिच्छसि प्रियम्। श्रीमती तु कुरु यथा पश्येन्नान्यः पश्येत्तथाविधम्।। 23।।

ityāhāvāṃ nṛpastatra tathetyuktrvāpyahaṃ tataḥ/
āgamiṣyāmi te rājan śvaḥ prabhāte gṛhaṃ prati//
āgatohaṃ jagannātha kartumarhasi me priyam/
vānarānanavat bhāti parvatasya mukhaṃ yathā//
tathā kuru jagannātha mama cedicchasi priyam/
śrīmatī tu kuru yathā paśyennānyaḥ paśyettathāvidham//

Telling the king 'alright, I shall come to your place the next morning' (21), I have come straight to you for help, oh Lord of the world (Jagannātha) ! Please do that which is for my good and wherein lies my welfare (or do something for my good in the long run). Let the face of Parvata (the other sage) become like that of a monkey (22), and oh Lord of the world, for my sake and my welfare and good, if you so wish, let it so happen that only Śrīmatī sees that monkey-like face of his (Parvata) and no body else in the assembly is able to see it (23). [21-23]

तथेत्युक्त्वा स गोविन्दः प्रहस्य मधुसूदनः। त्वयोक्तं तत्करिष्यामि गच्छ सौम्य! यथासुखम्।। 24।।
एवमुक्तो मुनिर्हृष्टः प्रणिपत्य जनार्दनम्। मन्यमानः कृतात्मानमयोध्यां वै जगाम सः।। 25।।

tathetyuktvā sa govindaḥ prahasya madhusūdanaḥ/
tvayoktaṃ tatkariṣyāmi gaccha saumya ! yathāsukham//
evamukto munirhṛṣṭaḥ praṇipatya janārdanam/
manyamānaḥ kṛtātmānamayodhyāṃ vai jagāma saḥ//

When he (Nārada) said this, Madhusūdana Govinda (Viṣṇu) smiled pleasantly and said, 'I will do as you have said. You can cheerfully and happily go away from here, oh gentleman Nārada (24).

Hearing this, the sage felt very obliged and exhilarated. He reverentially prostrated before the Lord, who is munificent and benevolent towards his devotees (and that is why he is called Janārdana). Feeling contented, privileged and fulfilled, Nārada went confidently back to Ayodhyā (feeling certain that he has won the game, as it were, and has preempted Parvata in his endeavour to get Śrīmatī as his wife) (25). [24-25]

गते मुनिवरे तस्मिन् पर्वतोऽपि महामुनिः। प्रणम्य माधवं हृष्टोरहस्येनमुवाच ह।। 26।।
वृत्तान्तश्च निवेद्याग्रे नारदस्य जगत्पतेः। गोलांगुलमुखं यद्वन्मुखं भाति तथा कुरु।। 27।।
श्रीमती तु यथा पश्येन्नान्यः पश्येत्तथाविधम्।। 27½।।

gate munivare tasmin parvato'pi mahāmuniḥ /
praṇamya mādhavaṃ hṛṣṭorahasyenamuvāca ha //
vṛttāntaśca nivedyāgre nāradasya jagatpateḥ /
golāṃgulamukhaṃ yadvanmukhaṃ bhāti tathā kuru //
śrīmatī tu yathā paśyennānyaḥ paśyettathāvidham /

Meanwhile, after the sage's departure, the great sage Parvata arrived and bowed reverentially before Mādhava (Viṣṇu) with a cheerful and expectant heart. He took the Lord into confidence and secretly (26) told him the entire episode about which Nārada had already told him earlier. Then he (Parvata) pleaded, 'Oh Lord of the world (Jagatpati) ! Make it so happen that the face of Nārada turns into a monkey, and let it so happen that this face of his is visible to Śrīmatī alone and to no body else' (27½). [26-27½]

तच्छ्रुत्वा भगवान्विष्णुस्त्वयोक्तं च करोमि वै ।। 28 ।।
गच्छ शीघ्रमयोध्यां त्वं मा वादीर्नारदस्य वै। त्वया मे सम्विदं यच्च तथेत्युक्त्वा जगाम सः ।। 29 ।।

tacchrutvā bhagavānviṣṇustvayoktaṃ ca karomi vai //
gaccha śīghramayodhyāṃ tvaṃ mā vādīrnāradasya vai /
tvayā me samvidaṃ yacca tathetyuktvā jagāma saḥ //

Hearing this, Lord Viṣṇu said, 'I will do as you have said. Go to Ayodhyā soon and don't tell Nārada anything about it' (28½).

Saying that the Lord's orders will be carried out verbatim, the sage quickly went to Ayodhyā (to attend the marriage ceremony of Śrīmatī) (29).

ततो राजा समाज्ञाय प्राप्तौ मुनिवरौ तदा। माङ्गल्यैर्विविधैर्भद्रैरयोध्यां ध्वजमालिनीम् ।। 30 ।।
मण्डयामास लाजैश्च पुष्पैश्चैव समन्ततः ।। 30½ ।।

tato rājā samājñāya prāptau munivarau tadā /
māṅgalyairvividhairbhadrairayodhyāṃ dhvajamālinīm //
maṇḍayāmāsa lājaiśca puṣpaiścaiva samantataḥ /

The king (Ambarīṣa) saw that both the sages have arrived. Ayodhyā had been pleasantly decorated for the occasion from all the sides with various auspicious paraphernalia befitting the royal marriage, such as flags, buntings, standards and festoons (30). It was bedecked with flowers and stems (such as that of the plantain trees) in all the directions (30½). [30-30½]

अभिषिक्तगृहद्वारां सिक्ताङ्गणमहापथाम्।। 31।।
दिव्यगन्धरसोपेतां धूपितां दिव्यधूपकैः। कृत्वा च नगरीं राजा मण्डयामास तां सभाम्।। 32।।
दिव्यैर्गन्धैस्तथा धूपे रत्नैश्च विविधैस्तथा।। 32½।।

abhiṣiktagṛhadvārāṃ siktāṅgaṇamahāpathām //
divyagandharasopetāṃ dhūpitāṃ divyadhūpakaiḥ /
kṛtvā ca nagarīṃ rājā maṇḍayāmāsa tāṃ sabhām //
divyairgandhaistathā dhūpe ratnaiśca vividhaistathā /

The gates and doorways of each household of the city were decorated; avenues were sprinkled with scented and coloured water (31), and divine fragrances and perfumes as well as different types of scents were sprayed on them. The king had got the city, along with the royal court (32), sprayed with divine fragrances, perfumes and scents, and had them beautifully decorated with different gems and jewels (32½). [31-32½]

अलंकृता मणिस्तम्भैर्नानामाल्योपशोभितैः।। 33।।
परार्ध्यास्तरणोपेतैर्दिव्यैर्भद्रासनैर्वृताम् । नानाजनसमावेशैर्नरेन्द्रैरभिसंवृताम्।। 34।।

alaṃkṛtā maṇistambhairnānāmālyopaśobhitaiḥ //
parārdhyāstaraṇopetairdivyairbhadrāsanairvṛtām /
nānājanasamāveśairnarendrairabhisaṃvṛtām //

Jewel-studded pillars were adorned with numerous varieties of garlands, festoons and other types of hangings (33). Excellent seats and mattresses of different qualities and varieties were spread (for all the guests to sit and relax). Numerous kings and other especially invited guests for the occasion had come and assembled there (34). [33-34]

कृत्वा नृपेन्द्रस्तां कन्यामादाय प्रविवेश ह। सर्वाभरणसम्पन्नं श्रीरिवायतलोचना।। 35।।
करसम्मितमध्याङ्गी पञ्चस्निग्धा शुभानना। स्त्रीभिः परिवृता दिव्या श्रीमती संस्थिता सती।। 36।।

kṛtvā nṛpendrastāṃ kanyāmādāya praviveśa ha /
sarvābharaṇasampannaṃ śrīrivāyatalocanā //
karasammitamadhyāṅgī pañcasnigdhā śubhānanā /
strībhiḥ parivṛtā divyā śrīmatī saṃsthitā satī //

The king entered that august assembly accompanied by the maiden (his daughter). She was beautifully adorned with all possible ornaments. She resembled Goddess Lakṣmī with large, beautiful eyes (35); she had a very thin waist (which could literally be clasped by one's fist); she had a body which was smooth (i.e. had no body hair which was visible) at five places; and she had a charming and enchanting face. She was surrounded by her lady friends. Such a glorious and divine maiden named Śrīmatī came and stood there (at the marriage venue) (36). [35-36]

सभा तु सा भूमिपतेः समृद्धा मणिप्रवेकोत्तमरत्नचित्रा।
न्यस्तासना माल्यवती सुगन्धा तामन्वयुस्ते सुरराजवर्याः।। 37।

sabhā tu sā bhūmipateḥ samṛddhā maṇipravekottamaratnacitrā /
nyastāsanā mālyavatī sugandhā tāmanvayuste surarājavaryāḥ //

That royal court or assembly of the prosperous king (Ambarīṣa) was bedecked with glittering gems and jewels. The girl sat on a seat with a fragrant garland in her hands, and there she resembled the daughter of the king of Gods (i.e. the daughter of Indra) by her divine beauty and majestic charm (37).

अथाययौ ब्रह्मवरात्मजो महान् स्त्रैविद्य वृद्धोभगवान्महात्मा।
सपर्वतो ब्रह्मविदां वरिष्ठो महामुनिर्नारद आजगाम।। 38।।

athāyayau brahmavarātmajo mahān straividya vṛddhobhagavānmahātmā /
saparvato brahmavidāṃ variṣṭho mahāmunirnārada ājagāma //

Just at that time, the great sage Nārada—who was the son of Brahmā (the creator), who was a great expert in the three legendary 'Vidyās' (called Trividyā or the three fundamental knowledge that a wise man is expected to have), was elderly, was the most exalted soul who was constantly, without break, repeating the name of the Lord God, and who was the senior most amongst those who were expert in the knowledge pertaining to the supreme Brahma (called Brahma Vidyā)—arrived there along with his companion, sage Parvata (38).

[Note :—(a) The 'Trividyā' is that knowledge which is enshrined in the three Vedas—the Ṛg, the Sāma and the Yajur. This Trividyā has been dealt widely in the different Upaniṣads. See also Canto 25, note to verse no. 120. (b) The 'Brahma Vidyā' is the knowledge pertaining to Brahma who is the supreme, transcendental, all pervading, supreme authority of the creation, and from whom the creation has come into being. All the Upaniṣads target Brahma in their teachings.]

Thus ends Canto 3 of the ancient and glorious epic story of Śrī Rāma an Sītā, called Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa, describing the arrival of Nārada and Parvata in the assembly where the marriage ceremony of king Ambarīṣa's daughter, Śrīmatī, was being head, with a desire to marry her.

* * *

Canto 4

The causes of Śrī Rāma's incarnation

The two wise sages, Nārada and Parvata, went to marry Śrīmatī. The Lord appeared there invisibly and sat between them, disguised as a human. The maiden was stunned and exasperated when she saw the monkey faced sages, and she finally married Lord Viṣṇu who was in disguise. Frustrated, embarrassed and peeved at being denied the opportunity to marry Śrīmatī, and feeling let down by Viṣṇu, the sages cursed him that he would become a 2-armed human being, the form he had assumed when he sat between the sages. They also cursed him that he would have to suffer the agony of separation from a woman like these two sages had suffered. The Lord accepted the curse, and in due course of time, manifested himself as Śrī Rāma in the household of one of the descendants of Ambarīṣa, king Daśaratha.

तवागतौ समीक्ष्याथ राजा संभ्रान्तमानसः। दिव्यमासनमादिश्य पूजयामास तावुभौ।। 1।।

tavāgatau samīkṣyātha rājā saṃbhrāntamānasaḥ /
divyamāsanamādiśya pūjayāmāsa tāvubhau //

Seeing them (Nārada and Parvata) arrive, the king (Ambarīṣa), with a gentle heart, gave them beautiful and comfortable seats to sit upon. He also worshipped and welcomed them with respect (because they were exalted sages, notwithstanding the fact that they had become overcome by passion and lust) (1).

उभौ देवऋषी दिव्यौ नित्यज्ञानवतां वरौ। समासीनौ महात्मानौ कन्यार्थे मुनिसत्तमौ।। 2।।

ubhau devarṣī divyau nityajñānavatāṃ varau /
samāsīnau mahātmānau kanyārthe munisattamau //

Those two divine, celestial sages, who were infinitely superior in knowledge compared to others, and were great and exalted souls, sat down on their respective seats with a desire to get that girl in marriage (2).

[Note :—The adjectives used to describe the sages and the fact that they wished to marry the same girl is used by sage Vālmīki to highlight the truth that lust and passion are so blinding that they obscure the wisdom of even the most enlightened of sages. So one must be aware and wary of them.]

तावुभौ प्रणिपत्याग्रे कन्यां तां श्रीमतीं शुभाम्। स्थितां कमलपत्राक्षीं प्राह राजा यशस्विनीम्।। 3।।
अनयोर्य वरं भद्रे! मनसा त्वमिहेच्छसि। तस्मै मालामिमां देहि प्रणिपत्य यथाविधि।। 4।।

tāvubhau praṇipatyāgre kanyāṃ tāṃ śrīmatīṃ śubhām /
sthitāṃ kamalapatrākṣīṃ prāha rājā yaśasvinīm //
anayorya varaṃ bhadre ! manasā tvamihecchasi /
tasmai mālāmimāṃ dehi praṇipatya yathāvidhi //

After paying his obeisance to them, the king said to the girl named Śrīmatī, who was lotus-eyed and famous (3), 'Oh lady ! Out of these two, whoever you decide to accept (as your groom), bow before him and put the garland around his neck' (4). [3-4]

एवमुक्ता तु सा कन्या स्त्रीभिः परिवृता तदा। मालां हिरण्मयीं दिव्यामादाय शुभलोचना।। 5।।
यत्रासीनौ महात्मानौ तत्रागम्य स्थिता यदा। ईक्षमाना मुनिश्रेष्ठौ नारदं पर्वतं तथा।। 6।।
गोलांगुलमुखं भीता किञ्चिद्धास्य समन्विता। सम्भ्रान्तमनसा तत्र प्रवाते कदली यथा।। 7।।
तस्थौ तामाह राजासौ वत्से किं त्वं करिष्यसि। अनयोरेकमुद्दिश्य देहि मालामिमां शुभे।। 8।।

evamuktā tu sā kanyā strībhiḥ parivṛtā tadā /
mālāṃ hiraṇmayīṃ divyāmādāya śubhalocanā //
yatrāsīnau mahātmānau tatrāgamya sthitā yadā /
īkṣamānā muniśreṣṭhau nāradaṃ parvataṃ tathā //
golāṃgulamukhaṃ bhītā kiñciddhāsya samanvitā /
sambhrāntamanasā tatra pravāte kadalī yathā //
tasthau tāmāha rājāsau vatse kiṃ tvaṃ kariṣyasi /
anayorekamuddiśya dehi mālāmimāṃ śubhe //

When this instruction was given to that auspicious lady with beautiful eyes, she got up politely from her seat, and surrounded or accompanied by her lady friends or maids and holding the beautiful golden garland in her hands (5), she came to the place where the two great sages sat eagerly in anticipation. When she saw those two exalted sages, Nārada and Parvata (6), with their monkey-like faces, she became scared and stunned, but she was very amused and felt embarrassed. That lady with a clear and pure heart and consciousness stood there dazed, resembling a plantain tree standing in a strong breeze. [That is, just like the leaves of a plantain tree shake in a strongly blowing wind, the girl shivered at the fearful sight of the two monkeys-faced sages and was horrified at the prospect of having to marry any one of them] (7).

The king intervened when he saw that she was indecisive, saying, 'Daughter, what are you doing? Put the garland on one of these two' (8). [5-8]

सा प्राह पितरं त्रस्ता इमौ तु वानराननौ। मुनिश्रेष्ठौ न पश्यामि नारदं पर्वतं तथा।। 9।।
अनयोर्मध्यतस्त्वेकं वरं षोडशवार्षिकम्।। 9½।।

sā prāha pitaraṃ trastā imau tu vānarānanau /
muniśreṣṭhau na paśyāmi nāradaṃ parvataṃ tathā //
anayormadhyatastvekaṃ varaṃ ṣoḍaśavārṣikam /

Getting exasperated, she said to her father, 'Their faces are like monkeys! I am not able to see either of those two exalted sages, Nārada and Parvata (9). But a handsome and attractive youth of 16 years of age is sitting in their middle (9½). [9-9½]

सर्वाभरणसंयुक्तमतसीपुष्पसंनिभम्।। 10।।
दीर्घबाहुं विशालाक्षं तुङ्गोरःस्थलमुत्तमम्। चामीकराभं करणपटयुग्मकशोभितम्।। 11।।
विभक्तत्रिवलीयुक्तनाभिं व्यक्तकृशोदरम्। हिरण्याभरणोपेतं सुरङ्गकनखं शुभम्।। 12।।
पद्माकारकरं त्वेनं पद्मास्यं पद्मलोचनम्। पद्मांघ्रिं पद्महृदयं पद्मनाभं श्रियावृतम्।। 13।।
दंतपंक्तिभिरत्यर्थं कुन्दकुड्मलसन्निभम्। हसन्तं मां समालोक्य दक्षिणं च प्रसार्य वै।। 14।।
पाणिं स्थितमिमं छत्रं पश्यामि शुभमूर्धजम्।। 14½।।

sarvābharaṇasaṃyuktamatasīpuṣpasaṃnibham //
dīrghabāhuṃ viśālākṣaṃ tuṅgoraḥsthalamuttamam /
cāmīkarābhaṃ karaṇapaṭayugmakaśobhitam //
vibhaktatrivalīyuktanābhiṃ vyaktakṛśodaram /
hiraṇyābharaṇopetaṃ suraṅgakanakhaṃ śubham //
padmākārakaraṃ tvenaṃ padmāsyaṃ padmalocanam /
padmāṃghriṃ padmahṛdayaṃ padmanābhaṃ śriyāvṛtam //
daṃtapaṃktibhiratyarthaṃ kundakuḍmalasannibham /
hasantaṃ māṃ samālokya dakṣiṇaṃ ca prasārya vai //
pāṇiṃ sthitamimaṃ chatraṃ paśyāmi śubhamūrdhajam /

That youth is adorned by all the ornaments. He is like the flower of the 'Linseed tree' (called Alasī) (10). He has long arms, large eyes, a broad and prominent chest, a golden radiant complexion, wears a two-piece garment (11), has an abdomen with three folds of skin around the navel (i.e. has a muscular abdomen), and a muscular, flat and well-contoured stomach (i.e. he is not pot-bellied). He is adorned by golden ornaments, has beautiful nails, and is most auspicious, pleasant, charming, enchanting and bewitching to look at (12). His hands, face, eyes, feet, heart (chest) and navel—all resemble the lotus flower. He is endowed with a glorious and radiant halo of majesty and glory around him (13). His teeth resemble a row of buds of the lily flower. He looks at me with a bewitching and enchanting smile. He has the ceremonial umbrella over his head and has spread his right hand to me (as a gesture of welcome and acceptance). I can see that he is the only one who has a beautiful, charming, auspicious and pleasant face here in this assembly (14½). [10-14½]

एवमुक्तो मुनिः प्राह नारदः संशयं गतः ।। 15 ।।
कियन्तो बाहवस्तस्य कन्ये वद यथातथम् ।। 15½ ।।
evamukto muniḥ prāha nāradaḥ saṃśayaṃ gataḥ //
kiyanto bāhavastasya kanye vada yathātatham /

When Nārada heard her say so, he became suspicious and asked her, 'Oh maiden! Tell me the fact; how many armed does he have?' [15-15½]

बाहुद्वयं च पश्यामीत्याह कन्या सुविस्मिता ।। 16 ।।
प्राह तां पर्वतस्तत्र तस्य वक्षःस्थले शुभे। किञ्च पश्यसि मे ब्रूहि करे किं धारयत्यायि ।। 17 ।।
कन्या तमाह मालां वै चंचद्रूपामनुत्तमाम्। वक्षःस्थलेऽस्य पश्यामि करे कार्मुकसायकौ ।। 18 ।।
bāhudvayaṃ ca paśyāmītyāha kanyā suvismitā //
prāha tāṃ parvatastatra tasya vakṣaḥsthale śubhe /
kiñca paśyasi me brūhi kare kiṃ dhārayatyāyi //
kanyā tamāha mālāṃ vai caṃcadrūpāmanuttamām /
vakṣaḥsthale'sya paśyāmi kare kārmaukasāyakau //

The maiden replied, 'I see two arms' (16). Then Parvata asked her, 'Oh the auspicious once! What is present on his chest, and what does he hold in his hands? Look at him carefully and tell me' (17).

The maiden replied that he is wearing a very beautiful garland draped over his chest, and he holds a bow and an arrow in his hands' (18). [16-18]

एवमुक्तौ मुनिश्रेष्ठौ परस्परमनुत्तमौ। मनसा चिन्तयन्तौ तौ मायेयं कस्याचिद्भवेत् ।। 19 ।।
मायावी तस्करो नूनं स्वयमेव जनार्दनः ।। 19½ ।।
evamuktau muniśreṣṭhau parasparamanuttamau /
manasā cintayantau tau māyeyaṃ kasyācidbhavet //
māyāvī taskaro nūnaṃ svayameva janārdanaḥ /

When she said this, the two sages felt aghast and they wondered what the mystery was. They discussed amongst themselves whose trick it was. They concluded that this cunning trickery has been done by an imposter, and he is surely none other than Janārdana (Viṣṇu) himself (because no one else has these divine features as had been described by Śrīmatī in verse nos. 13-14½, 16 and 18). [19-19½]

आगतो नान्यथा कुर्यात्कथं मेऽन्यो मुखं त्विदम्।। 20।।
गोलांगूलीयमित्येवं चिन्तयामास नारदः। पर्वतोऽपि तथैवैतद्वानरत्वं कथं मया।। 21।।
प्राप्तमित्येव सहसा चिन्तामापेदिवांस्तथा।। 21½।।

āgato nānyathā kuryātkathaṃ me'nyo mukhaṃ tvidam //
golāṃgūlīyamityevaṃ cintayāmāsa nāradaḥ /
parvato'pi tathaivaitadvānaratvaṃ kathaṃ mayā //
prāptamityeva sahasā cintāmāpedivāṃstathā /

'Certainly, he (Viṣṇu) has come personally. Otherwise, how come our faces have become like a monkey'. Nārada thought thus in his mind, and the two of them became very worried and anxious about the prospects of marrying the girl and preventing any catastrophe from happening in a royal assembly which would humiliate and embarass them no end [20-21½].

ततो राजा प्रणम्यासौ नारदं पर्वतं तथा।। 22।।
भवद्भ्यां किमिदं भद्रौ कृतं बुद्धि विमोहनम्। स्वस्थौ भवन्तौ तिष्ठेतां यदि कन्यार्थमुद्यतौ।। 23।।

tato rājā praṇamyāsau nāradaṃ parvataṃ tathā //
bhavadbhyāṃ kimidaṃ bhadrau kṛtaṃ buddhi vimohanam /
svasthau bhavantau tiṣṭhetāṃ yadi kanyārthamudyatau //

The king bowed before sages Nārada and Parvata and said to them (22), 'Oh gentlemen! What kind of confusion and delusion are you both having? If the girl wishes to marry anyone of you, then at least sit properly and cheerfully, and shed your worrisome and nervous countenance and demeanours. Why do you look so exasperated and nervous?' (23). [22-23]

एवमुक्तौ मुनिश्रेष्ठौ नृपमूचतुरुल्वणौ। त्वमेव मोहं कुरुषे नावामिह कथञ्चन।। 24।।
आवयारेकमेषा ते वरयत्वेव भामिनी।। 24½।।

evamuktau muniśreṣṭhau nṛpamūcaturulvaṇau /
tvameva mohaṃ kuruṣe nāvāmiha kathañcana //
āvayārekameṣā te varayatveva bhāminī /

When the king said this, the two exalted sages replied to him (in annoyance), 'It is you who has created this dilemma and confusion. We have no confusion or perplexity. Let this girl accept (or choose) any one of us she wishes' (24-24½).

ततः सा कन्यका भूयः प्रणिपत्य च देवताम्।। 25।।
पित्रा नियुक्ता सहसा मुनिशापभयाद्द्विज।। 25½।।
tataḥ sā kanyakā bhūyaḥ praṇipatya ca devatām //
pitrā niyuktā sahasā muniśāpabhayāddvija /

Scared stiff at the prospects of an imminent curse from either of the two sages, the king made the girl bow before his household deity whom the clan worshipped and to try again to make a choice of her groom (25-25½).

[Note :—These stanzas can be interpreted as follows also—'The girl was made to bow respectfully before those honourable sages, who have been called Devatās to show their exalted stature, by the father who was bitterly scared of inviting the wrath of the two sages who were enamoured of the girl and were so infatuated by her that they both wished to marry her. She was inspired by her father to try once again and make a choice of her groom. The fact that the girl could not decide in the first instance about her groom shows that she was in a great dilemma and full of embarrassment and disenchantment when she saw the two sages with monkey faces eyeing her with a desire to marry her'.]

मालामादाय तिष्ठन्ती तयोर्मध्ये समाहिता।। 26।।
पूर्ववत्पुरुषं दृष्ट्वा माल्ये तस्मै ददौ हि सा।। 26½।।
mālāmādāya tiṣṭhantī tayormadhye samāhitā //
pūrvavatpuruṣaṃ dṛṣṭvā mālye tasmai dadau hi sā /

Carefully the girl took the garland in her hands and stood in the middle of the two sages. She once again saw that the 'Puruṣa' (literally meaning a male; but here referring to the gentleman referred to in verse nos. 6½-14½ and 16-18 above; the Puruṣa is Lord Viṣṇu in a human form—see verse no. 42) was sitting there. So she put the garland around him (or literally gave the victory garland to him) (26-26½).

[Note :—The garland, once put around the neck of the candidate, proved that the would be bride has selected her groom. There were no questions asked as to her choice. In the present case, the girl had selected the Puruṣa, or Lord Viṣṇu, as her future husband.]

अनन्तरं च सा कन्या दृष्ट्वा न मनुजैः पुनः ।। 27 ।।
ततो नादः समभवत्किमेतदिति विस्मयात् ।। 27½ ।।

anantaraṃ ca sā kanyā dṛṣṭvā na manujaiḥ punaḥ //
tato nādaḥ samabhavatkimetaditi vismayāt /

Immediately thereafter, no human being could see that maiden (because she had vanished from sight) (27). There was an astonished murmur in the assembly about what a miraculous happening that has just happened (27-27½).

तामादाय गतो विष्णुः स्वस्थानं पुरुषोत्तमः ।। 28 ।।
पुरा तदर्थमनिशां तपस्तप्त्वा वराङ्गना। श्रीमतीयं समुत्पन्ना सा गता च तथा हरिम् ।। 29 ।।
तावुभौ मुनिशार्दूलौ धिक्त्वामित्येव दुःखितौ। वासुदेवं प्रति सदा जग्मतुर्भवनं हरेः ।। 30 ।।

tāmādāya gato viṣṇuḥ svasthānaṃ puruṣottamaḥ //
purā tadarthamaniśāṃ tapastaptvā varāṅganā /
śrīmatīyaṃ samutpannā sā gatā ca tathā harim //
tāvubhau muniśārdūlau dhiktvāmityeva duḥkhitau /
vāsudevaṃ prati sadā jagmaturbhavanaṃ hareḥ //

Lord Viṣṇu, who is the most exalted and supreme Puruṣa and the male aspect of Nature, called Puruṣottama, took her with him and went to his abode in the heaven, called Vaikuṇṭha (28).

In some ancient time, that beautiful lady, called a 'Varāṅganā', had done some severe Tapa (austerity, penance and keeping of stern religious vows) for being able to attain nearness to Hari (Viṣṇu). So she was born as Śrīmatī in her present life and ultimately achieved what she had wished in her previous life when she had done severe Tapa, i.e. nearness to Lord Hari or Lord Viṣṇu (29).

The two most exalted and senior sages (Nārada and Parvata) exclaimed in disgust, frustration and embarrassment, 'shame to you', and feeling extremely peeved, annoyed, exasperated, frustrated and anguished, they went hurriedly to the abode of Vāsudeva (Viṣṇu) (30). [28-30]

तावागतौ समीक्ष्याह श्रीमतीं भगवान्हरिः। मुनि श्रेष्ठौ समायातौ गूढस्वात्मानमत्र वै ।। 31 ।।
तथेत्युक्ता च सा देवी प्रहसन्ती चकार ह ।। 31½ ।।

tāvāgatau samīkṣyāha śrīmatīṃ bhagavānhariḥ /
muni śreṣṭhau samāyātau gūḍhasvātmānamatra vai //
tathetyuktā ca sā devī prahasantī cakāra ha /

Lord Hari (Viṣṇu) said to Śrīmatī when he saw the two sages coming to him, 'Both the exalted sages are coming here angrily and they appear to be frustrated. Hide your true identity, or conceal yourself from view so that they do not recognise you as Śrīmatī, the lady whom they had wished to marry in their infatuated delusion' (31).

When he said so, the great goddess smiled cheerfully and did as asked (31½). [31-31½]

नारदः प्रणिपत्याग्रे प्राह दामोदरं हरिम्।। 32।।
किमिदं कृतवानद्य मम त्वं पर्वतस्य च। त्वमेव नूनं गोविन्द कन्यां तां हृतवानसि।। 33।।
तच्छ्रुत्वा पुरुषो विष्णुः पिधाय श्रोत्रमच्युतः।। 33½।।
nāradaḥ praṇipatyāgre prāha dāmodaraṃ harim //
kimidaṃ kṛtavānadya mama tvaṃ parvatasya ca /
tvameva nūnaṃ govinda kanyāṃ tāṃ hṛtavānasi //
tacchrutvā puruṣo viṣṇuḥ pidhāya śrotramacyutaḥ /

Nārada prostrated and bowed before Dāmodara Hari (one of the names of Viṣṇu) and said to him (32), 'What kind of form (or face) did you make of me and Parvata? Oh Govinda! It is certain that you have tactfully, cunningly and deceitfully stolen or abducted that lady (and have prevented us from marrying her)' (33).

Hearing his words, Puruṣottama (i.e. the best male in Nature) Viṣṇu closed his ears with his hands in shock and disbelief. He protested at the insinuative remarks made by Nārada (33½). [32-33½]

पाणिभ्यां प्राह भगवन्भवता किमुदीरितम्।। 34।।
कामवादो न भावोऽयं मुनिवृत्तेरहो किल।। 34½।।
pāṇibhyāṃ prāha bhagavanbhavatā kimudīritam //
kāmavādo na bhāvo'yaṃ munivṛtteraho kila /

'Oh Lord (or the exalted one, or Bhagavān—i.e. sage Nārada)! What are you saying? If it is not for an amorous tendency, lustfulness, lasciviousness and passion (collectively called Kāma), then is it a behaviour and desire behooving a pious and great saint like you, who are so exalted, honoured and revered in the world, to make such an insinuating and despicable remark against me ?' (34-34½)

[Note :—Lord Viṣṇu sternly admonishes and reproaches Nārada for accusing him of stealing a lady because Nārada is so overcome with lust and passion that he has almost become blind and does not know what he is saying. For an exalted and pious soul as Nārada, to yearn for a lady and expecting her hand in marriage is something unthinkable of and most deplorable. So, Viṣṇu expresses his astonishment and utter surprise at Nārada being overcome with greed and passion.]

एवमुक्तो मुनिः प्राह वासुदेवं स नारदः ।। 35 ।।
कर्णमूले मम कथं गोलांगूलमुखं त्विति ।। 35½ ।।
evamukto muniḥ prāha vāsudevaṃ sa nāradaḥ //
karṇamūle mama kathaṃ golāṃgūlamukhaṃ tviti /

At this, sage Nārada spoke in a low, conspiratorial voice in the ears of Vāsudeva (Viṣṇu), 'You have made my face look like a monkey (and have caused so much embarassment to me in the full assembly)!' (35-35½).

तदाकर्ण्य महाबुद्धिर्देवो नारायणो हरिः ।। 36 ।।
कर्णमूले तमादेहं वानरास्यं कृतं मया। पर्वतस्य तथा विप्र गोलांगूलमुखं तव ।। 37 ।।
यथा भवांस्तथ सोऽपि प्रार्थयामास निर्जने ।। 37½ ।।
tadākarṇya mahābuddhirdevo nārāyaṇo hariḥ //
karṇamūle tamādehaṃ vānarāsyaṃ kṛtaṃ mayā /
parvatasya tathā vipra golāṃgūlamukhaṃ tava //
yathā bhavāṃstatha so'pi prārthayāmāsa nirjane /

Hearing the words of Nārada spoken in a confidential tone in his ears, the most wise, intelligent and prudent Lord Nārāyaṇa Hari (Viṣṇu) (36) replied to him (Nārada) in a similar way, i.e. in a low, murmering, conspiratorial and confidential manner in his ears, 'I made your face look like that of a monkey, and oh Brāhmin, I have similarly made the face of sage Parvata look like that of a monkey. He (Parvata) had also requested me secretly or privately as you had done. That is, both of you had asked me to make the other one look like a monkey, and both of you are my devotees. So I had to obey the request of both of you. I'm not at fault (37½). [36-37½]

मामेवं भक्तिवशगस्तकृथास्म्यकरवं मुने ।। 38 ।।
न स्वेच्छ्या कृतं तद्वां प्रियार्थ नान्यथा त्विति। याचते यच्च यश्चैव तच्च तस्य ददाम्यहम् ।। 39 ।।
न दोषोऽत्र गुणो वापि युवयोर्मम वा द्विजः ।। 39½ ।।
māmevaṃ bhaktivaśagastakṛthāsmyakaravaṃ mune //
na svecchayā kṛtaṃ tadvāṃ priyārtha nānyathā tviti /
yācate yacca yaśvaiva tacca tasya dadāmyaham //
na doṣo'tra guṇo vāpi yuvayormama vā dvijaḥ /

Oh sage! I am bound by the inviolable bonds of endearments and affection for both of you because you are my sincere devotees and dependant upon me. That is why I did this because I had your welfare in my mind, which is of great concern to me and of paramount importance (38). I have not done it willingly and to humiliate either of you, but have done what I did for the sake of your good and welfare. Whatever my devotee asks me or requests me for, I give it to him, or I endeavour to fulfill his desire (39).

In this, there is no fault or virtue of either of us. [That is, you had asked me that Parvata should be monkey-faced, so I made him look like a monkey, thereby fulfilling your desire. At the same time, ironically, Parvata had also asked me to make you look like a monkey, so I had to obey his commands, because both of you are equal in my eyes and I had to fulfill the desire of both of you. I was helpless in this. So, it is not my fault that both of you looked like monkeys in the assembly. In fact, jealously and passion had got the better of you both!] (39½) [38-39½]

पर्वतोऽपि तथा प्राह तस्याप्येवं जगाद सः ।। 40 ।।
शृण्वतोरुभयोस्तत्र प्राह दामोदरो वचः। प्रियं भवतोः कृतवान्सत्येनायुधमालभे ।। 41 ।।

parvato'pi tathā prāha tasyāpyevaṃ jagāda saḥ //
śṛṇvatorubhayostatra prāha dāmodaro vacaḥ /
priyaṃ bhavatoḥ kṛtavānsatyenāyudhamālabhe //

When Parvata asked him (Viṣṇu), he repeated the same answer. Then Dāmodara (Viṣṇu) addressed both the sages and said, 'I say on oath with truthfulness and my armaments as witness that I have done what was good for both for you' (40-41).

नारदः प्राह धर्मात्मा आवयोर्मध्यतः स्थितः। धनुष्मान्द्विभुजःको नु तां हृत्वा गतवान्किल ।। 42 ।।

nāradaḥ prāha dharmātmā āvayormadhyataḥ sthitaḥ /
dhanuṣmāndvibhujaḥko nu tāṃ hṛtvā gatavānkila //

Then Nārada said, 'Who was that righteous gentleman who was sitting in our midst with a bow and arrow in his hands, and who had stolen or abducted that maiden and went away with her ?' (42)

तच्छ्रुत्वा वासुदेवोऽसौ प्राह तौ मुनिसत्तमौ। मायाविनौ महात्मानौ बहवः सन्ति सत्तमौ ।। 43 ।।
तत्र सा श्रीमती देवी हृता केनापि सुव्रतौ ।। 43½ ।।

tacchrutvā vāsudevo'sau prāha tau munisattamau /
māyāvinau mahātmānau bahavaḥ santi sattamau //
tatra sā śrīmatī devī hṛtā kenāpi suvratau /

Hearing this, Vāsudeva (Viṣṇu) said to the sages, 'Oh exalted sages ! There are numerous cunning imposters, cheats and tricksters in this world who cheat even the most wise and erudite people as well as pious saints who are most senior and exalted (43). Oh the keepers of righteous vows (called Suvrato) ! Someone amongst them must have stolen or abducted Śrīmatī from the assembly (43½). [43-43½]

चक्रपाणिरहं नित्यं चतुर्बाहुरिति स्थितिः ।। 44 ।।
तस्मान्नाहमतथ्यो वै भवद्भ्यांविदितं हि तत् ।। 44½ ।।
cakrapāṇiraham nityaṃ caturbāhuriti sthitiḥ //
tasmānnāhamatathyo vai bhavadbhyāṃviditaṃ hi tat /

I always hold a discus and have four arms. You are well aware of this form of mine. So, I cannot have been there (because the person you had seen sitting in your midst had two arms and held a bow and an arrow—see verse nos. 42)' (44-44½).

इत्युक्तौ प्रणिपत्यैनमूचतुः प्रीतमानसौ ।। 45 ।।
कोऽत्र दोषस्तव विभो नारायण जगत्पते ।। 45½ ।।
ityuktau praṇipatyainamūcatuḥ prītamānasau //
ko'tra doṣastava vibho nārāyaṇa jagatpate /

When he (Viṣṇu) said so, the two sages bowed before him and said affectionately, 'Oh Nārāyaṇa, the Lord of the universe ! Oh Vibho (i.e. one who is almighty, all powerful, omnipresent, omniscient) ! There is no fault on your part in what has happened (45-45½).

दौरात्म्यं तु नृपस्यैव मायां हि कृतवानसौ ।। 46 ।।
इत्युक्त्वा जग्मतुस्तस्मान्मुनि नारदपर्वतौ ।। 46½ ।।
daurātmyaṃ tu nṛpasyaiva māyāṃ hi kṛtavānasau //
ityuktvā jagmatustasmānmuni nāradaparvatau /

Certainly, that king is mischievous and evil. He must have done some trick (in order to prevent us from marrying his daughter)'. Saying this, sages Nārada and Parvata went away from there (the heavens) (46-46½).

अम्बरीषं समासाद्य शापेनैनमयोजयत्।। 47।।
नारदः पर्वतश्चैव यस्मादावामिहागतौ। आहूय पश्चादन्यस्मै कन्यां त्वं दत्तवानसि।। 48।।
मायायोगेन तस्मात्त्वां तमोऽज्ञाभिभविष्यति। तेन नात्मानत्यर्थं यथावत्त्वं हि वेत्स्यसि।। 49।।

ambarīṣaṃ samāsādya śāpenainamayojayat //
nāradaḥ parvataścaiva yasmādāvāmihāgatau /
āhūya paścādanyasmai kanyāṃ tvaṃ dattavānasi //
māyāyogena tasmāttvāṃ tamo'jñābhibhaviṣyati /
tena nātmānatyarthaṃ yathāvattvaṃ hi vetsyasi //

They went back to king Ambarīṣa and vented their wrath and anger at him in the form of a curse, 'When we, Nārada and Parvata, came here at your invitation, then inspite of your words given to us in honour, you had cunningly, mischievously and deceitfully given that maiden (your daughter, Śrīmatī) on the sly to someone else. Hence, you would become ignorant and stupid (i.e. an Ajñānī). You will lose the factual awareness of your Ātmā or your true self. [That is, you will cease to be an enlightened soul worthy of respect and honour, and instead, you would become an ordinary ignorant and foolish human being who indulges in pursuing self gratification and yearns for the perishable comforts and pleasures of this mundane and artificial world, thereby falling in the whirlpool-like trap of birth and death which has no end and keeps the creature swirling endlessly in its vicious cycle. You will lose your wisdom, erudition and enlightenment for which you are so renowned at present] [47-49].

एवं शापे प्रवृत्तेतु तमोराशि रथोत्थितः। नृपं प्रति ततश्चकं विष्णोः प्रादुरभूत्क्षणात्।। 50।।
चक्रवित्रासितं घोरं तावुभावभ्यगात्तमः। ततः संत्रस्तसर्वांगौ धावमानौ महामुनी।। 51।।
पृष्ठतश्चक्रमालोक्य तमोराशिं च दुर्मदम्।। 51½।।

evaṃ śāpe pravṛttetu tamorāśi rathotthitaḥ /
nṛpaṃ prati tataścakaṃ viṣṇoḥ prādurabhūtkṣaṇāt //
cakravitrāsitaṃ ghoraṃ tāvubhāvabhyagāttamaḥ /
tataḥ saṃtrastasarvāṃgau dhāvamānau mahāmunī //
pṛṣṭhataścakramālokya tamorāśiṃ ca durmadam /

Consequent to this wrathful curse by the sages and inspired by it, a.dense shadow of darkness appeared there. As soon as that darkness descended and moved towards the king to engulf him from all sides and devour him, the discus which was assigned by Lord Viṣṇu with the express mandate of protecting the king from any adverse circumstance (see canto 2, verse no. 41-42) (50) intervened on his behalf (to protect the king from the sage's curse). When it (discus) moved towards the darkness that was proceeding swiftly to devour the king, in order to cut through it (i.e. to overcome it and repel it), the darkness got terrified. Thus tormented by the violent and most potent discuss of Lord Viṣṇu, the darkness reverted and pounced back on the two great sages.

Seeing that both the horrible darkness and the invincible and unrelenting discus of Viṣṇu are approaching them menacingly simultaneously, the sages ran away from there as fast as they could (51½). [50-51½]

कन्यासिद्धिरहो प्राप्तस्त्यावयोरिति वेगितौ ।। 52 ।।
लोकालोकतामनिशं धावमानौ तमोऽर्दितौ । त्राहि त्राहीति गोविन्दं भाषमाणौ भयार्दितौ ।। 53 ।।

kanyāsiddhiraho prāptastyāvayoriti vegitau //
lokālokatāmaniśaṃ dhāvamānau tamo'rditau /
trāhi trāhīti govindaṃ bhāṣamāṇau bhayārditau //

Exclaiming in exasperation, 'this is how we have been rewarded for desiring that maiden', the two sages regretted and lamented as they kept on running furiously day and night in order to avoid the darkness and the discus which were pursuing them relentlessly throughout the world wherever they went. Hunted and terrified out of their wits, they pleaded urgently, 'Oh Govinda (Viṣṇu)! Save us, save us' (52-53).

विष्णुलोकं ततो गत्वा नारायण जगत्पते । वासुदेव हृषीकेश पद्मनाभ जनार्दन ।। 54 ।।
त्राह्यावां पुण्डरीकाक्ष नाथोऽसि पुरुषोत्तमः ।। 54½ ।।

viṣṇulokaṃ tato gatvā nārāyaṇa jagatpate /
vāsudeva hṛṣīkeśa padmanābha janārdana //
trāhyāvāṃ puṇḍarīkākṣa nātho'si puruṣottamaḥ /

They went to the abode of Viṣṇu, called Viṣṇu Loka, and pleaded, 'Oh Nārāyaṇa, Oh Lord of the world (Jagatpati), oh Vāsudeva (i.e. the lord of the 8 Vasus), oh Hṛṣīkeśa, oh Padmanābha (i.e. the one whose navel is like a divine lotus, or the one from whose navel the legendary lotus had emerged and from which Brahmā, the creator, made his appearance), oh Janārdana (i.e. the one who is merciful, compassionate, benevolent and munificent towards his humble devotees and followers) (54), oh Puṇḍarīkākṣa (i.e. the lotus-eyed Lord), oh our Lord Puruṣottama (i.e. the most exalted and best macrocosmic male aspect of creation, the Virāṭ Puruṣa, Viṣṇu)! Protect us, save us!' (54-54½).

[Note :—All these names are among the 1000 names of Viṣṇu. The fact that the sages called him with so many names shows that they were very eager for his protection; they wanted to draw his attention in the quickest possible time. That is why they used as many names as came to their minds so that the Lord will pay attention to at least one of the names being called out.]

इत्युचतुर्वासुदेवं मुनी नारदपर्वतौ। ततो नारायणोऽचिन्त्यः श्रीमाञ्छ्रीवत्सलक्षणः।। 55।।
निर्वायं चक्रं ध्वान्तं च भक्तानुग्रहकाम्यया। अम्बरीषश्च मद्भक्तस्तथेमौ मुनिसत्तमौ।। 56।।
अनयोर्नृपस्य च तथा हितं कार्यं मया पुनः।। 56½।।

ityucaturvāsudevaṃ munī nāradaparvatau /
tato nārāyaṇo'cintyaḥ śrīmāñchrīvatsalakṣaṇaḥ //
nirvāyaṃ cakraṃ dhvāntaṃ ca bhaktānugrahakāmyayā /
ambarīṣaśca madbhaktastathemau munisattamau //
anayornṛpasya ca tathā hitaṃ kāryaṃ mayā punaḥ /

When the sages Nārada and Parvata pleaded with the 4-armed Vāsudeva (Viṣṇu), who is in-comprehendible, who is known as Nārāyaṇa and who has the mark of Śrīvatsa on his chest (55), he immediately forbade the Cakra (his discus) from proceeding any further (i.e. he deactivated that weapon) with a desire to please and protect his devotees and show mercy on them.

He said, 'king Ambarīṣa is my dear and ardent devotee like the both of you. Oh great sages! I have to ensure the good of him as much as I am concerned about the welfare of you two' (56-56½). [55-56½]

आहूय तौ ततः श्रीमान्गिरा प्रह्लादयन्हरिः।। 57।।
उवाच भगवान्विष्णुः श्रूयतामिति मे वचः। क्षमेतां मुनिशार्दूलौ भक्तसंरक्षणाय मे।। 58।।
अपराद्धं च चक्रेण क्षमाशीला हि साधवः।। 58½।।

āhūya tau tataḥ śrīmāngirā prahlādayanhariḥ //
uvāca bhagavānviṣṇuḥ śrūyatāmiti me vacaḥ /
kṣametāṃ muniśārdūlau bhaktasaṃrakṣaṇāya me //
aparāddhaṃ ca cakreṇa kṣamāśīlā hi sādhavaḥ /

Then Hari (Viṣṇu) called them near him and spoke with them in a pleasant, soothing and reassuring voice to assuage their ruffled ego and to reassure them of his continued blessing and patronage for them. Viṣṇu said, 'Listen to me, oh exalted sages! Excuse me for what I have said for the purpose of protecting my devotee (king Ambarīṣa). It is the fault of this Cakra (discus) that he has been chasing you without any letup, but you must understand that it is merely doing its assigned duty; besides, pious and saintly people are forgiving and tolerant by nature' (57-58½).

ततस्तौ मुनिशार्दूलौ मायां तस्यावबुध्य च।। 59।।
ददतुश्च ततः शापं विष्णुमुद्दिश्य कोपनौ। श्रीमतीहरणं विष्णो यत्कृतं छद्मना त्वया।। 60।।
यया मूर्त्या तथैव त्वं जायेथाः मधुसूदन। अम्बरीषस्यान्ववाये राज्ञो दशरथस्य हि।। 61।।
पुत्रस्त्वं भविता पुत्री श्रीमती धरणी प्रजा। भविष्यति विदेहश्च प्राप्य तां पालयिष्यति।। 62।।
राक्षसापदः कश्चितां ते भार्या हरिष्यति।। 62½।।

tatastau muniśārdūlau māyāṃ tasyāvabudhya ca//
dadatuśca tataḥ śāpaṃ viṣṇumuddiśya kopanau/
śrīmatīharaṇaṃ viṣṇo yatkṛtaṃ chadmanā tvayā//
yayā mūrtyā tathaiva tvaṃ jāyethāḥ madhusūdana/
ambarīṣasyānvavāye rājño daśarathasya hi//
putrastvaṃ bhavitā putrī śrīmatī dharaṇī prajā/
bhaviṣyati videhaśca prāpya tāṃ pālayiṣyati//
rākṣasāpadaḥ kaścitāṃ te bhāryā hariṣyati/

Then the two exalted sages realised that it was the delusion and deception caused by the Lord himself (59). Angered and peeved (that the Lord had cheated them on the pretext of doing their good), they cursed him wrathfully, 'Oh Viṣṇu! You have deceitfully and cunningly abducted or stolen Śrīmatī using your deceptive skills (60). Oh Madhusūdana! The form (image or body) you had taken or assumed to do the trick (and have deprived us from marrying that girl), you will have to take birth in the same form in the same clan of Ambarīṣa whose daughter we wished to marry. You will be born in the household of king Daśaratha of Ambarīṣa's clan (61) as his son. This Śrīmatī will be the daughter of mother earth, and king Videha will find her and bring her up (as his own daughter) (62). An evil and pervert demon will steal your wife in a similar fashion. [That is, since you have assumed a different form then your actual self in order to deceive us and deprive us of the opportunity of marrying and staying close with this girl, that demon will also assume a different form then his real one and steal your wife deceitfully using cunning and trick. You will also have to suffer from the agony of being deprived of a lady whom you love so much and wish to be near, as we have suffered now.] (62½) [59-62½]

यतो राक्षसधर्मेण हृतासि श्रीमती शुभा।। 63।।
अतस्ते रक्षसा भार्या हर्तव्या छद्मनाऽच्युत। यथा प्राप्तं महद्दुःखमावाभ्यां श्रीमतीकृते।। 64।।
हाहेति रुदता लक्ष्यं तथा दुःखं च तत्कृते।। 64½।।

yato rākṣasadharmeṇa hṛtāsi śrīmatī śubhā //
ataste rakṣasā bhāryā hartavyā chadmanā'cyuta /
yathā prāptaṃ mahadduḥkhamāvābhyāṃ śrīmatīkṛte //
hāheti rudatā lakṣyaṃ tathā duḥkhaṃ ca tatkṛte /

The way you had adopted evil method of deceit, impostering and cunning fit for a demon to slyly usurp and abduct the auspicious Śrīmatī (63), your wife will also be abducted or stolen by a evil and fallen demon in a similar fashion using a deceitful form and employing dirty tricks. Even as we two are greatly anguished and grieved because of Śrīmatī (64), you too would roam about in the forest, greatly tormented, and lamenting, weeping and grieving for her' (64½). [63-64½]

इत्युक्तवन्तौ तौ विप्रौ प्रोवाच मधुसूदनः।। 65।।
अम्बरीषस्यान्ववाये भविष्यति महायशाः। श्रीमान्दशरथो नाम भूमिपालोऽतिधार्मिकः।। 66।।

ityuktavantau tau viprau provāca madhusūdanaḥ //
ambarīṣasyānvavāye bhaviṣyati mahāyaśāḥ /
śrīmāndaśaratho nāma bhūmipālo'tidhārmikaḥ //

When those Brāhmins said so (or, cursed Viṣṇu as above), Madhusūdana (Viṣṇu) said, 'Sure enough, there shall certainly be a most famous, renowned, majestic, religious and righteous king named Daśaratha in the clan of king Ambarīṣa (65-66).

तस्याहमग्रजः पुत्रो रामो नाम भवाम्यहम्। तत्र मे दक्षिणो बाहुर्भरतो भविता किल।। 67।।

tasyāhamagrajaḥ putro rāmo nāma bhavāmyaham /
tatra me dakṣiṇo bāhurbharato bhavitā kila //

I shall manifest myself as his eldest son known as Rāma. There, my right arm shall become Bharata (one of my three younger brothers) (67).

शत्रुघ्नो वामबाहुश्च शेषोऽसौ लक्ष्मणः स्वयम्। ऋषिशापो न चैव स्यादन्यथा चक्र गम्यताम्।। 68।।
ऋषिशापतमोराशे यदा रामो भवाम्यहम्। तत्र मां समुपागच्छ गच्छेदानीं नृपं विना।। 69।।

śatrughno vāmabāhuśca śeṣo'sau lakṣmaṇaḥ svayam /
ṛṣiśāpo na caiva syādanyathā cakra gamyatām //
ṛṣiśāpatamorāśe yadā rāmo bhavāmyaham /
tatra māṃ samupāgaccha gacchedānīṃ nṛpaṃ vinā //

My left arm would become Śatrughna and the legendary Śeṣanātha (the great mythological multi-hooded python on whose coiled body Viṣṇu reclines on the legendary ocean of milk called Kṣīrasāgara) will manifest himself as Lakṣmaṇa. In this way, the curse of the sages will not go in vain.' Then Viṣṇu addressed his Cakra, the discus, 'Oh Cakra! You should come to me (68) at that time when I shall become Rāma under the influence of the dark shadow cast upon me by the curse of these sages. Meanwhile, you should go back to the king (Ambarīṣa) to keep protecting him as you have been doing till now' (69). [68-69]

त्यक्त्वापि च मुनिश्रेष्ठाविति स्म प्राह माधवः। एवमुक्ते तमोनाशं तत्क्षणाच्च जगाम वै।। 70।।
आत्मार्थं सञ्चितं तेन प्रभुणा भक्तरक्षिणा। निवारितं हरेश्चक्रं यथापूर्वमतिष्ठत।। 71।।

tyaktvāpi ca muniśreṣṭhāviti sma prāha mādhavaḥ /
evamukte tamonāśaṃ tatkṣaṇācca jagāma vai //
ātmārthaṃ sañcitaṃ tena prabhuṇā bhaktarakṣiṇā /
nivāritaṃ hareścakraṃ yathāpūrvamatiṣṭhata //

Cursed and forsaken by those most exalted sages, Mādhava (Viṣṇu) had, for the moment, come under the influence of delusions, and consequentially he was dumbstruck. But as soon as he accepted the curse, the dark shadow of delusions vanished instantly from there (and he regained his prime wisdom) (70). The Lord, who is always eager and diligent in giving protection to his devotees, kept that dark curse reserved for himself (because otherwise the infallible curse would have punished and ruined his ardent and loyal devotee king Ambarīṣa). Freed from its responsibilities, Hari's Cakra (discus) also reverted back to its original place and went back to do his duty to guard Ambarīṣa (71). [70-71]

मुनिश्रेष्ठो भयान्मुक्तौ प्रणिपत्य जनार्दनम्। निर्गतौ शोकसन्तप्तावूचतुस्तौ परस्परम्।। 72।।
अद्यप्रभृति देहान्तमावां कन्यापरिग्रहम्। न करिष्याव इत्युक्त्वा प्रतिज्ञाय च तावृषी।। 73।।

muniśreṣṭho bhayānmuktau praṇipatya janārdanam /
nirgatau śokasantaptāvūcatustau parasparam //

adyaprabhṛti dehāntamāvāṃ kanyāparigraham /
na kariṣyāva ityuktvā pratijñāya ca tāvṛṣī //

Freed from the horrifying fear of being pursued by their curse and chased from behind by the invincible and formidable killer discus of Viṣṇu, the great sages prostrated before Janārdana (Viṣṇu) and then went away from there. They were overcome with great sorrow and were full of contrition; they were tormented by great anguish and grief (because they had become lustful, were overcome by such denigrating and demeaning qualities as ignorance, delusions and infatuations, and had done the most unimaginable thing that can ever be expected from a holy, pious saint—to angrily curse their own benefactor and Lord, Lord Viṣṇu). They talked to each other most regretfully (72) and made a stern vow, 'From today onwards till as long as we live, we will never ever accept a girl in our lives'. Those sages made a firm resolve in this manner as a token of their repentance for their misdemeanours and fallen integrity (73). [72-73]

मौनध्यानपरौ शुद्धौ यथापूर्वं व्यवस्थितौ। अम्बरीषोऽपि राजासौ परिपाल्य च मेदिनीम्।। 74।।
सभृत्यज्ञातिसम्बन्धो विष्णुलोकं जगाम वै।। 74½।।

maunadhyānaparau śuddhau yathāpūrvaṃ vyavasthitau /
ambarīṣo'pi rājāsau paripālya ca medinīm //
sabhṛtyajñātisambandho viṣṇulokaṃ jagāma vai /

Those two sages went back and sat silently in deep meditation as they used to the earlier. Meanwhile, king Ambarīṣa also reigned over his kingdom dutifully and took good care of his subjects (74).

When the appropriate time came (i.e. at the time of his death), he went to the abode of Viṣṇu, called Viṣṇu Loka, along with his ministers, councilors, elders, wise ones and attendants (74½). [74-74½]

मानार्थमम्बरीषस्य तथैव मुनिसिंहयोः।। 75।।
रामो दाशरथिर्भूत्वा तमसा लुप्तबुद्धिकः। कदाचित्कार्यवशतः स्मृतिः स्यादात्मनः प्रभोः।। 76।।

mānārthamambarīṣasya tathaiva munisiṃhayoḥ //
rāmo dāśarathirbhūtvā tamasā luptabuddhikaḥ /
kadācitkāryavaśataḥ smṛtiḥ syādātmanaḥ prabhoḥ //

For the sake of Ambarīṣa and to keep the honour of those sages who were like lion amongst their peers (i.e. were so exalted that they were like a king among other sages even as a lion is a king of animals), he (Viṣṇu) became the son of Daśaratha. He was then called Rāma. The Lord became enveloped in the veil of 'Tama' (the qualities representing darkness caused by worldly ignorance and delusions), and his supreme wisdom and enlightenment were eclipsed. [That is why Viṣṇu, the Supreme Being and Lord of the universe, behaved like an ordinary human being when he assumed the form of Śrī Rāma.] But on occasions, the Lord remembered the divine cause for which he had manifested himself as Śrī Rāma (75-76).

पूर्णार्थोऽपि महाबाहुरपूर्णार्थ इव प्रभु। अनुग्रहाय भक्तानां प्रभूणामीदृशी गतिः ।। 77 ।।
pūrṇārtho'pi mahābāhurapūrṇārtha iva prabhu/
anugrahāya bhaktānāṃ prabhūṇāmīddaśī gatiḥ//

The Lord, who is renowned for the great potent, strength and valour of his arms, appeared to be incomplete (i.e. he appeared to lack the wholesome divinity and characteristic features of the complete Brahma when he manifested himself in a human form as Rāma, the son of Daśaratha, on this earth), though his primary form was complete and wholesome in every respect. It is for the benefit and upon the request of his devotees and ardent followers that their Lord came to such a humble state. (77)

मायां कृत्वा महेशस्य प्रोत्थिता मानुषी तनुः । तस्मान्माया न कर्तव्या विद्वद्भिर्दोषदर्शिभिः ।। 78 ।।
māyāṃ kṛtvā maheśasya protthitā mānuṣī tanuḥ/
tasmānmāyā na kartavyā vidvadbhirdoṣadarśibhiḥ//

The great and supreme Lord of the Gods called Maheśa (literally meaning the 'great God'; here meaning Viṣṇu and not Śiva, though the word Maheśa is generally used to denote the latter) had to take the gross form of a human being because he had taken recourse to Māyā (which is equivalent to using tricks, conceit, deceit, imposterings, cunning, scheming, illusions, delusions, deception and maverism in order to achieve a specific goal). That is why, those wise, erudite, sagacious and scholarly persons who are well aware of the different faults in the characters and behaviours, the thinking processes and actions that a man takes in this world, should never get involved in such deeds or actions that involve Māyā (i.e. they should never adopt Māyā or take recourse to deceit, conceit, deception, cunning and imposterings in any of their activities and behaviours in this world, because if they do so they would be downgraded to a lowly stature even as the supreme Lord of the universe, Viṣṇu, was forced to become a human being simply because he used tricks upon his own devotees, sages Parvata and Nārada, though that trick was meant for their welfare and it had to be used in order to protect his devotee Ambarīṣa from the curse and wrath of the sages) (78).

एतत्ते कथितं सर्व रामजन्मकथाश्रयम्। अम्बरीषस्य माहात्म्यं मायावित्त्वं च वै हरेः ।। 79 ।।

etatte kathitaṃ sarva rāmajanmakathāśrayam /
ambarīṣasya māhātmyaṃ māyāvittvaṃ ca vai hareḥ //

In this way, I (Vālmīki) have described to you (Bhāradvāja) the causes for Śrī Rāma's birth (or incarnation of Viṣṇu in a human for as Śrī Rāma) besides the great glory of Ambarīṣa and the illusionary form that Hari (Viṣṇu) had taken (to protect the king and secure the welfare of his devotees, sages Parvata and Nārada, by preventing them from falling prey to lust and passions) (79).

[Note :—The 'illusionary form of Hari' refers to—(a) his invisible form which had two arms when he sat between the sages, Nārada and Parvata, and was seen only by Śrīmatī and was invisible to the two sages, and (b) the Lord's human form as Śrī Rāma. Verse nos. 76-77 clearly states that Śrī Rāma was veiled under the shadow of 'incompleteness' as compared to his true 'complete and holistic' identity as Viṣṇu. This 'incompleteness' created an illusion that Śrī Rāma was an ordinary prince and not the divine Lord that he actually was. The sage emphasises the fact that since Viṣṇu had assumed a human form and was under the influence of Māyā, he made certain errors, though that error was done willingly, to stress the point that every human being, no matter how divine, holy, saintly and pious he is, is bound to make mistakes because of the fact that every human being is under the influence of Māyā, small or big. The point is to accept one's faults and failings and try to overcome them instead of feigning ignorance about one's shortcomings and pretending to be perfect, which no human being is.]

यः पठेच्छृणुयाद्वापि मायावित्त्वं हरेर्विभोः। मायां विसृज्य पुण्यात्मा विष्णुलोकं स गच्छति ।। 80 ।।

yaḥ paṭhecchṛṇuyādvāpi māyāvittvaṃ harervibhoḥ /
māyāṃ visṛjya puṇyātmā viṣṇulokaṃ sa. gacchati //

A person who reads, studies and attentively listens to the maverick tricks and illusions created by the almighty, majestic, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient and supreme Lord Hari, becomes a sinless and a righteous soul. He forsakes Māyā (because he has seen or understood its horrifying and denigrating effects), and upon death he goes to the abode of Lord Viṣṇu himself (i.e. a person who has realised the pitfalls of coming under the influence of Māyā and therefore avoids it, shall find liberation and deliberation from this mundane world full of delusions and deceptions) (80).

दशरथसुत जन्मकारणं यः पठति शृणोत्यनुमोदते द्विजेन्द्रः।
व्रजति सभगवद्गृहातिथित्वं नहि शमनस्य भवं कृतश्चिदस्य।। 81।।
daśarathasuta janmakāraṇaṃ yaḥ paṭhati śṛṇotyanumodate dvijendraḥ /
vrajati sabhagavadgṛhātithitvaṃ nahi śamanasya bhavaṃ kṛtaścidasya //

A person who reads, studies, hears attentively and tries to correctly understand the episodes relating to the causes of the birth of Śrī Rāma as the son of Daśaratha in the correct perspective, is regarded as a 'Indra' or a king amongst the wise and elderly ones, becomes a guest in the divine abode of the Lord God called Bhagavān, and has not to fear from death and decay (i.e. he becomes immortal and fearless) (81).

[Note :—The two sages were so infatuated and overcome with passion and lust that they didn't think twice before requesting Viṣṇu to make the other one look like a monkey (Canto 3, verse nos. 22 and 27). Not only this, they had even asked that this form should be visible to the bride-to-be and to no one else. 'Fine', said the Lord, and that is why the sages couldn't see the Lord (Viṣṇu) sitting between them and had to ask the girl to describe his features for them, because she was the only person who could see the truth (Canto 4, verse nos. 10-18). The Lord, in effect, gave the two sages a taste of their own medicine.

Further, the sages were so deluded and deceived by Māyā that they became angry and cursing, a trait which is an absolute no-no in spiritual pursuits and is totally unbecoming and un-behooving of sages and saints of the stature of Parvata and Nārada. Such is the effect of passions and delusion that Māyā creates that they had the temerity to curse even their patron Lord who was their only benefactor and Lord. The Lord, on the other hand, comes out shining in his splendorous and immaculate and benevolent character—because all that he did, even the use of tricks and cunning that he had to employ and the sufferings he had to undergo as a human being as a consequence of the curses which the sages had heaped on him while the Lord was only trying to prevent his devotee Ambarīṣa from getting cursed by the two sages and, at the same time, ensuring that the two sages did not fall prey to passions and lust—were for two basic reasons, viz. (a) he had to protect the life and integrity of the righteous king Ambarīṣa who was not at fault at all, and (b) to prevent the two exalted and enlightened sages from being trapped by the entangling web of Māyā and its accompanying denigrating effects, such as lust and passions for fulfilling carnal desires as well as sensual gratification. The Lord had amply made this clear in Canto 4, verse no. 56-58½.

This Canto emphasises that emancipation and salvation are possible for only those souls who keep away from Māyā and its attendant faults and misdemeanours (verse no. 78½-80).]

Thus ends Canto 4 of the epic Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa written by sage Vālmīki describing the causes of Śrī Rāma's birth.

* * *

Canto 5

Kauśika and other devotees find succour and residence in the abode of Lord Viṣṇu

This Canto describes how sages Kauśika and other ardent and sincere devotees of Lord Viṣṇu attained an eternal abode in the heavens where the Lord resides. These devotees used to sing the glories of Lord Viṣṇu and had taken a stern vow that they would sing and hear only the glories of the Lord and nothing else. Once, they were put under great pressure to sing laurels and laud the worldly glories and majesties of a king named Kaliṅgarāja, to which they bluntly refused. Fearing the king's wrath and forced by him, they voluntarily pierced their tongues to become dumb, instead of submitting to his desire of singing his glories instead of the glories of Lord Viṣṇu. Angered at their temerity in refusing to sing the king's glories and annoyed by their defiance, the king banished them from his kingdom. The sages headed north (towards the Himālayas). They died in due course and were welcomed by Brahmā, the creator, himself who took them to Lord Viṣṇu. The Lord too welcomed them, praised and honoured them, and gave them eternal residence in his abode.

भरद्वाज शृणुष्वाथ सीताजन्मनि कारणम्। पुरा त्रेतायुगे कश्चित्कौशिको नाम वै द्विजः।। 1।।

bharadvāja śṛṇuṣvātha sītājanmani kāraṇam /
purā tretāyuge kaścitkauśiko nāma vai dvijaḥ //

Oh Bhāradvāja! Now listen to the reason why Sītā took birth on this earth. In some ancient time, during the era called 'Tretā', there was a Brāhmin named Kauśika (1).

[Note :—In Hindu mythology, there are four eras, called Yugas, which complete one cycle of creation. These four Yugas are the following—Sat, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali. Śrī Rāma was born in the two Yuga called Tretā, while Lord Kṛṣṇa was born in the three Yuga called Dvāpara. The present era is known as Kaliyuga.]

वासुदेवपरो नित्यं नामगानरतः सदा। भोजनासनशय्यासु सदा तद्गतमानसः।
उदारचरितं विष्णोर्गायमानः पुनः पुनः ।। 2 ।।

vāsudevaparo nityaṃ nāmagānarataḥ sadā /
bhojanāsanaśayyāsu sadā tadgatamānasaḥ /
udāracaritaṃ viṣṇorgāyamānaḥ punaḥ punaḥ //

He was very committed to Vāsudeva (Viṣṇu). He was always engrossed in chanting the holy name of the Lord to such an extent that at all times—while eating, while sitting and while sleeping—his mind was fixed on the Lord. He repeatedly and incessantly sang the magnanimous, generous and gracious glorious stories pertaining to Lord Viṣṇu (2).

विष्णुस्थलं समासाद्य हरेः क्षेत्रमनुत्तमम्। अगायत हरिं तत्र तालवल्गुलयान्वितम्।। 3 ।।
मूर्च्छनामूर्च्छायोगेन श्रुतिमण्डलवेदितम्। भक्तियोगसमापन्नो भिक्षामश्नाति तत्र वै।। 4 ।।

viṣṇusthalaṃ samāsādya hareḥ kṣetramanuttamam /
agāyata hariṃ tatra tālavalgulayānvitam //
mūrcchanāmūrcchāyogena śrutimaṇḍalaveditam /
bhaktiyogasamāpanno bhikṣāmaśnāti tatra vai //

He came to the best and holy places where Viṣṇu was worshipped and which were the realms of Lord Hari. There he sang the glories of Hari (Viṣṇu) in a melodious, enchanting tune and rhythm (3). He roamed from village to village, singing the melodious glories of the Lord using all the seven notes of Indian classical music, first in an ascending order and then in a descending one. Sometimes he fainted or obtained a state of unconsciousness obtained by ascetics who are lost in the thought of the Lord. [That is, often he fainted in ecstasy and obtained the state of supreme blissfulness which exalted hermits and sages and ascetic obtained while they were doing meditation.] At other times, he sang in a loud, articulate, resonating, cheerful and clearly audible voice. He had indeed attained the exalted state obtained by sincere devotion for the Lord, a state known as Bhakti. He ate only by begging (and lived a life like a true renunciate fryer or a mendicant ascetic) (4). [3-4]

[Note :—(i) Viṣṇu's place and Hari's realm refer to temples and its precincts, pilgrim sites etc. where Viṣṇu or Hari was worshipped. It also refers to villages, hamlets and country where the Lord was honoured. (ii) The 7 notes of Indian classical music are the following— Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni.]

तत्रैनं गायमानं च दृष्ट्वा कश्चिद्द्विजस्तदा। पद्माक्ष इत विख्यातस्तस्मै चान्नं ददौ सदा।। 5।।

tatrainaṃ gāyamānaṃ ca dṛṣṭvā kaściddvijastadā /
padmākṣa ita vikhyātastasmai cānnaṃ dadau sadā //

A Brāhmin named Padmākṣa saw him singing in ecstasy, and gave him a lot of food to eat (5).

सकुटुम्बो महातेजा अश्नन्नन्नं च तस्य वै। कौशिको तदा हृष्टो गायन्नास्ते हरि प्रभुम्।। 6।।

sakuṭumbo mahātejā aśnannannaṃ ca tasya vai /
kauśiko tadā hṛṣṭo gāyannāste hari prabhum //

That glorious devotee (Kauśika) put up at the place of Padmākṣa. The latter ate the consecrated food (i.e. the food that was left over after it was offered to Kauśika) along with is kith and kin. Kauśika spent his time joyously singing the glorious of the Lord Hari, full of ecstasy and in exhilaration (6).

शृण्वन्नास्ते स पद्माक्षः काले काले च भक्तितः।
कालयोगेन सम्प्राप्ताः शिष्या वै कौशिकस्य च।। 7।।

śṛṇvannāste sa padmākṣaḥ kāle kāle ca bhaktitaḥ /
kālayogena samprāptāḥ śiṣyā vai kauśikasya ca //

The householder Padmākṣa used to hear his devotional singing from time to time, and in due course of time he became Kauśika's disciple (7).

सप्तराजन्यवैश्यानां विप्राणां कुलसम्भवाः। ज्ञानविद्याधिका शुद्धा वासुदेवपरायणाः।। 8।।
तेषामपि तथान्नाद्यं पद्माक्षः प्रददौ स्वयम्। शिष्यैश्च सहितो नित्यं कौशिको हृष्टमानसः।। 9।।

saptarājanyavaiśyānāṃ viprāṇāṃ kulasambhavāḥ /
jñānavidyādhikā śuddhā vāsudevaparāyaṇāḥ //
teṣāmapi tathānnādyaṃ padmākṣaḥ pradadau svayam /
śiṣyaiśca sahito nityaṃ kauśiko hṛṣṭamānasaḥ //

Seven other persons born in the Kṣatriya (the warrior class), Vaiśya (the trading class) and Brāhmin (the teacher and wise class of people) families also were inspired by Kauśika's devotion and they became initiated by him. They too became wise and enlightned and managed to clean their hearts. They also became diligent and ardent devotees of Lord Vāsudeva (Viṣṇu) (8).

Padmākṣa provided them with food along with Kauśika. Kauśika remained happy and cheerful along with his new disciples (9). [8-9]

[Note :—The name of these 7 persons who became Kauśika's disciples are given in verse nos. 18-19 below.]

विष्णुस्थले हरिं तत्र आस्ते गायन्यथाविधि। तत्रैव मालवो नाम वैद्यो विष्णुपरायणः।। 10।।
दीपमालां हरेर्नित्यं करोति प्रीतमानसः। मालतीनाम भार्यासीत्तस्य नित्यं पतिव्रता।। 11।।
गोमयेन समालिप्य हरेः क्षेत्रं समन्ततः। भर्त्रा सहास्ते सम्प्रीता शृण्वती गानमुत्तमम्।। 12।।

viṣṇusthale hariṃ tatra āste gāyanyathāvidhi /
tatraiva mālavo nāma vaidyo viṣṇuparāyaṇaḥ //
dīpamālāṃ harernityaṃ karoti prītamānasaḥ /
mālatīnāma bhāryāsīttasya nityaṃ pativratā //
gomayena samālipya hareḥ kṣetraṃ samantataḥ /
bhartrā sahāste samprītā śṛṇvatī gānamuttamam //

In the place of Viṣṇu (see note to verse nos. 3-4) where Kauśika lived at that time, there was another medicine man, known as a Vaidya, by the name of Mālava who was also an ardent devotee of Viṣṇu (10).

He used to light a number of lamps in the name of the Lord and sang the glories of Hari regularly with devotion, sincerity and an exhilarated mind. He had a chaste and loyal wife named Mālatī (11).

She used to look after the upkeep of the precincts where Hari was worshipped (i.e. the temple area) and plastered the place daily with a paste made from cow dung. She used to hear the excellent devotional songs being sung by her husband and lived a cheerful life (12). [10-12]

कुशस्थलीसमुत्पन्ना ब्राह्मणाः शंसितव्रताः। पञ्चाशद्वै समापन्ना हरेर्गानार्थमुत्तमा।। 13।।

kuśasthalīsamutpannā brāhmaṇāḥ śaṃsitavratāḥ /
pañcāśadvai samāpannā harergānārthamuttamā //

Once, 50 Brāhmins, born at hermitages and who kept religious vows, came to that place to sing devotional songs and glories of Hari. [That is, a group of Brahmacārīs came there to sing devotional songs in a community of saints, a system called 'singing Kīrtana' wherein devotional songs are sung in unison and in chorus accompanied by simple musical instruments] (13).

साधयन्तो हि कार्याणि कौशिकस्य महात्मनः। ज्ञानविद्यार्थतत्त्वज्ञाः शृण्वन्तौ ह्यवसंस्तु ते।। 14।।

sādhayanto hi kāryāṇi kauśikasya mahātmanaḥ/
jñānavidyārthatattvajñāḥ śṛṇvantau hyavasaṃstu te//

Those saints stayed there, serving the great soul Kauśika. They intended to acquire the sublime and subtle knowledge about the essential Truth and absolute Reality (i.e. they wished to learn about Brahma, Ātmā, creature, their interrelationship, and the truthful knowledge contained in the scriptures sans its dogmas and rituals). For the purpose, they attentively heard what Kauśika said or preached (14).

ख्यातमासीत्तदा तस्य गानं वै कौशिकस्य च। श्रुत्वा राजा समभ्येत्य कालिङ्गो वाक्यमब्रवीत्।। 15।।
कौशिकाद्यगणैः सार्धं गायस्वेह च मां पुनः। शृणुध्वं च तथा यूयं कुशस्थलजना अपि।। 16।।

khyātamāsīttadā tasya gānaṃ vai kauśikasya ca/
śrutvā rājā samabhyetya kāliṅgo vākyamabravīt//
kauśikādyagaṇaiḥ sārdhaṃ gāyasveha ca māṃ punaḥ/
śṛṇudhvaṃ ca tathā yūyaṃ kuśasthalajanā api//

The fame of Kauśika's devotional singing and erudition spread far and wide. When the king of Kaliṅga (present day state of Orissa in eastern India) heard about it, he issued a royal edict and ordered (15), 'Kauśika shall sing my laurels and laud my majesty and glory along with his disciples. And you Brāhmins who live in thatched huts (or in hermitages) must listen to it' (16). [15-16]

तच्छ्रुत्वा कौशिकः प्राह राजानं सां त्वयन्गिरा। न जिह्वाग्रे महाराज वाणी च मम सर्वदा।। 17।।
हरेरन्यमपीन्द्रं वा स्तौति नापि न वक्ति च।। 17½।।

tacchrutvā kauśikaḥ prāha rājānaṃ sāṃ tvayangirā/
na jihvāgre mahārāja vāṇī ca mama sarvadā//
hareranyamapīndraṃ vā stauti nāpi na vakti ca/

Hearing this royal order, Kauśika tried to explain the situation to the king most politely. He said, 'My tongue cannot ever pronounce the word 'great king or Mahārāja' (17). What else, my voice has no interest in even praising the king of Gods, Indra. My tongue and voice can praise no one else except Lord Hari' (17½). [17-17½]

एवमुक्ते च तच्छिष्या वसिष्ठो गौतमोऽरुणिः ।। 18 ।।
सारस्वतस्तथा वैश्यश्चित्रमालस्तथा शिशुः । ऊचुस्तं पार्थिवं तत्त्वं यथा प्राह स कौशिकः ।। 19 ।।

evamukte ca tacchiṣyā vasiṣṭho gautamo'ruṇiḥ //
sārasvatastathā vaiśyaścitramālastathā śiśuḥ /
ūcustaṃ pārthivaṃ tattvaṃ yathā prāha sa kauśikaḥ //

His disciples named Vasiṣṭha, Gautama, Aruṇi, Sārasvata Vaiśya, Citramālā and Śiśu conveyed what Kauśika had said to the king (18-19).

[Note :—By reading verse nos. 17-19 together we come to the conclusion that Kauśika stayed in the realm of the king of Kaliṅga. When the king heard that there was an expert singer in his realm, he summoned him to sing his glories, as the kings were used to hearing their own glories being sung by bards and minstrels. Since Kauśika was a senior teacher, the orders of the king were taken to his hermitage by the king's messengers. When Kauśika heard the orders of the king, he politely refused to sing his glories, because for him the only king was Lord Viṣṇu. His decision was conveyed to the king by his disciples listed in verse nos. 18-19 on his behalf.]

श्रीकराश्च तथा प्रोचुः पार्थिवं विष्णुतत्पराः । श्रोत्राणीमानि शृण्वन्तिहरेरन्यं न पार्थिवम् ।। 20 ।।
मा ते कीर्तिं वयं तस्माच्छृणुमो नैव वा स्तुतिम् ।। 20½ ।।

śrīkarāśca tathā procuḥ pārthivaṃ viṣṇutatparāḥ /
śrotrāṇīmāni śṛṇvantihareranyaṃ na pārthivam //
mā te kīrti vayaṃ tasmācchṛṇumo naiva vā stutim /

Even Śrīkara (the seven disciple) joined the others and said to the king, 'We are ardent and faithful devotees of Lord Viṣṇu. Our ears hear the glories of Hari and nothing else (20). That is why we cannot hear either your 'Stuti' (i.e. your praises and eulogies) or your 'Kīrti' (i.e. your glorious deeds, your fames, your virtues) being lauded or sung by our ears' (20½). [20-20½]

तच्छ्रुत्वा पार्थिवो रुष्टो गीयतामिति चाब्रवीत् ।। 21 ।।
स्वभृत्यान्ब्राह्मणा ह्येते कीर्तिं शृण्वन्ति वै यथा । न शृण्वन्ति कथं तस्माद्गीयमानं समन्ततः ।। 22 ।।

tacchrutvā pārthivo ruṣṭo gīyatāmiti cābravīt //
svabhṛtyānbrāhmaṇā hyete kīrti śṛṇvanti vai yathā /
na śṛṇvanti kathaṃ tasmādgīyamānaṃ samantataḥ //

The king was very angry, annoyed and peeved. He asked his minstrels and royal bards to sing his glories. He asked in wonderment, 'Why can't these Brāhmins listen to my glories being sung if they can hear those of Hari?' (21-22).

> [Note :—The king asked his royal bards and minstrels to sing his eulogies in order to force the seven sages to hear his praises being sung in order to impose upon them his will. This was to counter the sages' claim that they cannot hear anything except the glories of Lord Hari.]

एवमुक्तास्ततो भृत्या जगुः पार्थिवसत्तमम्। निरुद्धकर्णा विप्रास्ते गाने वृत्ते सुदुःखिताः ।। 23 ।।
काष्ठशंकुभिरन्योन्यं श्रोत्राणि बिभिदुः किल। कौशिकाद्यास्तु तां ज्ञात्वा मनोवृत्ति नृपस्य वै ।। 24 ।।
निर्बन्धं कुरुते कस्मात्स्वगानेऽसौ नृपः स्थिरम्।
इत्युक्त्वा ते सुनियता जिह्वाग्रं चिच्छिदुः स्वकम् ।। 25 ।।

evamuktāstato bhṛtyā jaguḥ pārthivasattamam /
niruddhakarṇā viprāste gāne vṛtte suduḥkhitāḥ //
kāṣṭhaśaṃkubhiranyonyaṃ śrotrāṇi bibhiduḥ kila /
kauśikādyāstu tāṃ jñātvā manovṛtti nṛpasya vai //
nirbandhaṃ kurute kasmātsvagāne'sau nṛpaḥ sthiram /
ityuktvā te suniyatā jihvāgraṃ cicchiduḥ svakam //

On the orders of the king, his minstrels and bards began to sing and laud his laurels and glories. The Brāhmins felts very anguished and tormented at being forced under duress to hear the praises of the king. So they closed their ears against those songs lauding the king's glories (23).

Greatly annoyed and feeling insulted and embarrassed, the king desired to get their ears pierced with iron nails. Becoming aware of the king's pervert and cruel intentions (24), Kauśika and other sages wondered in amazement why the king was so insistent and adamant in getting his own glories sung. Fearing that the king will use coercion and torture to compel them to sing his glories, the sages voluntarily pierced the tips of their tongues (so that they will become dumb and cannot be forced by the king to sing his glories) (25). [23-25]

ततो राजा सुसंक्रुद्धः स्वदेशात्तान्व्यवासयत्। आदाय वित्तं सर्वेषां ततस्ते जग्मुरुत्तराम् ।। 26 ।।

tato rājā susaṃkruddhaḥ svadeśāttānvyavāsayat /
ādāya vittaṃ sarveṣāṃ tataste jagmuruttarām //

The king lost his cool and became extremely angry. He exiled them from his kingdom and forfeited the little property that the sages had (such as their cattle, huts and meager belongings such as cooking utensils). Then the sages proceeded in the northern direction from there (26).

दिशामासाद्य कालेन कालधर्मेण योजिताः। तानागतान्यमो दृष्ट्वा किंकर्तव्यमिति स्म ह।। 27।।

diśāmāsādya kālena kāladharmeṇa yojitāḥ /
tānāgatānyamo dṛṣṭvā kiṃkartavyamiti sma ha //

In due course of time, when their end (death) approached, Kāla (the death God) saw them and wondered what he should do with them (27).

विस्मितस्तत्क्षणे विप्र ब्रह्मा प्राह सुराधिपान्। कौशिकादीन्द्विजानद्य वासुदेवपरायणान्।। 28।।
गानयोगेन ये नित्यं पूजयन्ति जनार्दनम्। तानादाय भद्रं वो यदि देवत्वमिच्छथ।। 29।।

vismitastatkṣaṇe vipra brahmā prāha surādhipān /
kauśikādīndvijānadya vāsudevaparāyaṇān //
gānayogena ye nityaṃ pūjayanti janārdanam /
tānādāya bhadraṃ vo yadi devatvamicchatha //

Seeing him confused and perplexed, Brahmā, the creator, said to the Gods at that time—'Kauśika and other sages are committed to and are ardent devotees of Vāsudeva (Viṣṇu) (28). They worship, adore and honour Janārdana (the Lord who is munificent, benevolent and compassionate towards his devotees and followers as well as the rest of the subjects of the creation) by regularly singing devotional songs in his honour. If they have the desire to attain the stature of Gods (i.e. if they wish to come to heaven and become immortal like the Gods), then go and bring them here' (29). [28-29]

इत्युक्त्वा लोकपालास्ते कौशिकेति पुनः पुनः। मालतीति तया केचित्पद्माक्षेति तथापरे।। 30।।
क्रोशमानाः समभ्येत्य तानादाय विहायसा। ब्रह्मलोकं गताः शीघ्र मुहूर्तार्द्धेन वै सुराः।। 31।।

ityuktvā lokapālāste kauśiketi punaḥ punaḥ /
mālatīti tayā kecitpadmākṣeti tathāpare //
krośamānāḥ samabhyetya tānādāya vihāyasā /
brahmalokaṃ gatāḥ śīghra muhūrtārddhena vai surāḥ //

On his (Brahmā's) instructions, the Gods called out repeatedly, 'Oh Kauśika, oh Mālatī, oh Padmākṣa'. The Gods took the group to the abode of Brahmā in a very short time (literally, in half a Muhūrta, or half of 1 hour 48 minutes = 54 minutes approximately) (30-31).

कौशिकादींस्तथा दृष्ट्वा ब्रह्मा लोकपितामहः। प्रत्यागम्य यथान्यायं स्वागतेनाभ्यपूजयत्।। 32।।

kauśikādīṃstathā dṛṣṭvā brahmā lokapitāmahaḥ /
pratyāgamya yathānyāyaṃ svāgatenābhyapūjayat //

Seeing Kauśika and others arrive in the heavens, the patriarch and grandfather of creation, Brahmā, duly welcomed them by honouring and worshipping them (32).

ततः कोलाहलश्चाभूदतिगौरवमुल्बणम्। ब्रह्मणा च कृतं दृष्ट्वा देवानां द्विजसत्तम।। 33।।

tataḥ kolāhalaścābhūdatigauravamulbaṇam /
brahmaṇā ca kṛtaṃ dṛṣṭvā devānāṃ dvijasattama //

Watching those exalted Brāhmins being given great honour, respect and being worshipped by Brahmā himself, there was a great turmoil amongst the Gods (because the Gods were absolutely amazed at the show of reverence to humans by none other than the creator himself, especially since the Gods are known for being over jealous and selfish) (33).

हिरण्यगर्भो भगवांस्तान्निवार्य सुरोत्तमान्। कौशिकादींस्तदादाय मुनिर्देवैः समावृत्तः।। 34।।
विष्णुलोकं ययौ शीघ्रं वासुदेवपरायणः।। 34½।।

hiraṇyagarbho bhagavāṃstānnivārya surottamān /
kauśikādīṃstadādāya munirdevaiḥ samāvṛttaḥ //
viṣṇulokaṃ yayau śīghraṃ vāsudevaparāyaṇaḥ /

Lord Hiraṇyagarbha (Brahmā) dispelled the doubts in the mind of the Gods and reassured them. Then, taking Kauśika and other sages with him and surrounded by the Gods themselves (34), all those devotees of Vāsudeva went to the abode of Viṣṇu in Viṣṇu Loka (34½). [34-34½]

तत्र नारायणो देवः श्वेतद्वीपनिवासिभिः।। 35।।
ज्ञानयोगेश्वरैः सिद्धैर्विष्णुभक्तिपरायणैः। नारायणसमैर्दिव्यैश्चतुर्बाहुधरैः शुभैः।। 36।।

tatra nārāyaṇo devaḥ śvetadvīpanivāsibhiḥ //
jñānayogeśvaraiḥ siddhairviṣṇubhaktiparāyaṇaiḥ /
nārāyaṇasamairdivyaiścaturbāhudharaiḥ śubhaiḥ //

There, Lord Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu) was present. The Gods, the residents of 'Śveta-dvīpa' (literally, the white continent) (35), those ascetics who were prominent amongst those who were wise, erudite, sagacious, scholarly and enlightened ones, and Siddhas (those exalted person who possessed special mystical powers) who were great and sincere devoṭees of Viṣṇu--all of them were present there. The auspicious Nārāyaṇa had a divine and holy form with four arms (36). [35-36]

[Note :—The 'inhabitants of the white continent' perhaps refers to the European race or those areas of the earth which are usually covered with snow, or those people who have a fair skin as opposed to those with a dark skin.]

विष्णुचिह्नसमापन्नैर्दीप्यमानैरकल्मषैः। अष्टाशीतिसहस्त्रैस्तु सेव्यमानो मनोजवैः।। 37 ।।
viṣṇucihnasamāpannaidīpyamānairakalmaṣaiḥ /
aṣṭāśītisahasraistu sevyamāno manojavaiḥ //

Lord Viṣṇu had all the signs which are his exclusive emblems. He was radiant, glorious and illuminated by a divine halo that surrounded him. He was pristine pure, immaculate and untarnished by any faults of creation. He was being served by 28,000 great souls who had self restraint, or who had vanquished their minds (37).

[Note :—The signs of Viṣṇu referred to above are the following—(i) the discus—Cakra, (ii) the lotus—Padma, (iii) the conch—Śaṅkha, and (iv) the mace—Gadā.]

अस्माभिर्नारदाद्यैश्च सनकाद्यैरकल्मषैः। भूतैर्नानाविधैश्चैव दिव्यस्त्रीभिः समन्ततः।। 38 ।।
asmābhirnāradādyaiśca sanakādyairakalmaṣaiḥ /
bhūtairnānāvidhaiścaiva divyastrībhiḥ samantataḥ //

He was being served by so many great sages like us (Vālmīki and Bhāradvāja), including sages Nārada and Sanakādi as well as others who were faultless and sinless sages. Besides them, different categories of creatures and all the divine glories, majesties, magnificence and good virtues in creation had assumed divine forms and had also collected around the Lord to serve him (38).

सेव्यमानोऽथ मध्ये वै सहस्त्रद्वारसंवृत्ते। सहस्त्रयोजनायामे दिव्ये मणिमये शुभे।। 39 ।।
विमाने विमले चित्रे भद्रपीठासने हरिः। लोककार्यप्रसक्तानां दत्त्वा दृष्टिं समास्थितः।। 40 ।।
sevyamāno'tha madhye vai sahasradvārasaṃvṛtte /
sahasrayojanāyāme divye maṇimaye śubhe //
vimāne vimale citre bhadrapīṭhāsane hariḥ /
lokakāryaprasaktānāṃ dattvā dṛṣṭiṃ samāsthitaḥ //

[These two verses describe the throne and the Lord's court in heaven.] He was being served by them all in a palace which had a thousand doors and was so huge that it covered 1000 Yojanas in area. [1 Yojana = approx 8 miles.] The auspicious throne upon which Viṣṇu sat was studded with beautiful and glittering gems. It was decorated with charming paintings, engravings and embossing. Lord Hari was majestically seated on this throne. His sight was fixed on those people who were involved in doing good to others (i.e. the Lord was very careful in taking care of those who were involved in doing charity and looking after other creatures of the creation) (39-40).

तस्मिन्कालेऽथ भगवान्कौशिकाद्यैश्च संवृत्तः। आगम्य प्रणिपत्याग्रे तुष्टाव गरुडध्वजम्।। 41 ।।

tasminkāle'tha bhagavānkauśikādyaiśca saṃvṛttaḥ /
āgamya praṇipatyāgre tuṣṭāva garuḍadhvajam //

At that time, Lord Brahmā came there accompanied by Kauśika, other sages and Gods. He bowed before the Lord (Viṣṇu) whose standard had the mark or insignia of Garuḍa (the legendary eagle or heron), on it. Brahmā said prayers in the Lord's honour (41).

ततोऽवलोक्य भगवान्हरिनारायणः प्रभुः। कौशिकेत्याह सम्प्रीत्या तान्सर्वांश्च यथाक्रमम्।। 42 ।।

tato'valokya bhagavānharinārāyaṇaḥ prabhuḥ /
kauśiketyāha samprītyā tānsarvāṃśca yathākramam //

Lord Nārāyaṇa Hari (Viṣṇu) saw them arrive and expressed his sincere affection towards Kauśika and his companions. He talked most affably and affectionately with each one of them (as a sign of great respect and welcome) (42).

जयघोषो महानासीन्माहाश्चर्ये समागते। ब्रह्माणमाह विश्वात्मा शृणु ब्रह्मन्यथोदितम्।। 43 ।।
कौशिकस्य च ये विप्राः साध्यसाधनतत्पराः। हिताय सम्प्रवृत्ता वै कुशस्थलनिवासिनः।। 44 ।।

jayaghoṣo mahānāsīnmāhāścarye samāgate /
brahmāṇamāha viśvātmā śrāṛṇu brahmanyathoditam //
kauśikasya ca ye viprāḥ sādhyasādhanatatparāḥ /
hitāya sampravṛttā vai kuśasthalanivāsinaḥ //

When the assembly saw this miraculous happening which was unexpected and fascinating, they marveled at the marvelous scene of Viṣṇu paying a personal attention to and talking endearingly with Kauśika and his companions individually. There was a loud chorus of acclaim. All those who were present there were astonished and amazed beyond measure. Then the macrocosmic Supreme Soul of the cosmos, the Supreme Being (Viṣṇu) said to Brahmā, 'Listen Brāhmin to what I say (43). This Kauśika Brāhmin is a sincere, ardent and diligent devotee of mine, and he is very committed in his spiritual pursuits. He observes all the tenets of spiritualism. These other companions of his hermitage (literally, those who live in a thatched cottage and sit on grass on the ground in a teacher's hermitage) who have accompanied him here also help him in his spiritual endeavours (44). [43-44]

मत्कीर्तिश्रवणे युक्ता गानतत्त्वार्थकोविदाः। अनन्यदेवता भक्ताः साध्या देवा भवन्त्विमे।। 45।।
मत्समीपे तथा ह्यस्य प्रवेषं देहि सर्वदा।। 45½।।

matkīrtiśravaṇe yuktā gānatattvārthakovidāḥ /
ananyadevatā bhaktāḥ sādhyā devā bhavantvime //
matsamīpe tathā hyasya praveṣaṃ dehi sarvadā /

All of them who have been devotedly hearing the hymns and songs of my glories and have been signing them like expert singers, would be called my eternal devotees. I shall be easily accessible to them (45). They will also be free to come to me (or be near to me) whenever they wish' (45½). [45-45½]

एवमुक्त्वा पुनर्देवः कौशिकं प्राह माधवः।। 46।।
स्वशिष्यैस्त्वं महाप्राज्ञ दिग्बलो नाम वै सदा। गणाधिपत्यमापन्नो यत्राह तत्समास्व वै।। 47।।

evamuktvā punardevaḥ kauśikaṃ prāha mādhavaḥ //
svaśiṣyaistvaṃ mahāprājña digbalo nāma vai sadā /
gaṇādhipatyamāpanno yatrāha tatsamāsva vai //

After having said this, Mādhava (Viṣṇu) addressed Kauśika personally, saying, 'Oh the great, wise and enlightened one ! I bless you that you, along with your disciples, would henceforth be known as 'Digbala' (literally, one who has formidable powers and strengths). You will become more exalted and superior than my other attendants here in my abode, and you can stay here for as long as you like (46-47).

मलतीमालवं चेति प्राह दामोदरो वचः। मम लोके यथाकामं भार्यया सह मालव।। 48।।
दिव्यरूपधरः श्रीमाञ्छृण्वन्गानमिहानुगैः। आस्व नित्यं यथाकामं यावल्लोका भवन्ति वै।। 49।।

malatīmālavaṃ ceti prāha dāmodaro vacaḥ /
mama loke yathākāmaṃ bhāryayā saha mālava //
divyarūpadharaḥ śrīmāñchṛṇvangānamihānugaiḥ /
āsva nityaṃ yathākāmaṃ yāvallokā bhavanti vai //

Then Dāmodara (Viṣṇu) said to Mālatī and her husband Mālava (see verse nos. 10-11), 'Oh Mālava! Stay with your wife in a divine form in my abode, the Viṣṇu Loka or Vaikuṇṭha, and listen to the devotional songs being sung in my honour here. As long as this abode lasts, you can stay here for as long as you wish' (48-49).

पद्माक्षमाह भगवान् धनदो भव मानद। धनानामीश्वरो भूत्वा विहरस्य यथासुखम्।। 50।।
padmākṣamāha bhagavān dhanado bhava mānada /
dhanānāmīśvaro bhūtvā viharasya yathāsukham //

Then the Lord said to Padmākṣa (see verse no. 5), 'Oh gentleman! You'll be rich and prosperous. Be a custodian of the heavenly riches and live here comfortably as long as you wish' (50).

ब्रह्मणं च ततः प्राह कौशिकोऽभूद्गणाधिपः।
गणाः स्तोष्यन्ति तं चाशु प्राप्तो मेऽस्ति सलोकताम्।। 51।।
brahmaṇaṃ ca tataḥ prāha kauśiko'bhūdgaṇādhipaḥ /
gaṇāḥ stoṣyanti taṃ cāśu prāpto me'sti salokatām //

Then finally he said to Brahmā, 'This Kauśika should become a chief 'Gaṇa' (i.e. he should be counted first amongst my attendants, followers and devotees). Let all other Gaṇas (my followers and attendants) please and pray to him (if they wish to please me). And let him (Kauśika) have a permanent residence in my abode here (51).

एते च विप्रा नियतं मम भक्ता यशस्विनः। श्रोत्रच्छिद्रं यथाहत्य शंकुभिर्वै परस्परम्।। 52।।
श्रोष्यामो नैव चान्यद्वै हरेः कीर्तिं विनेति ये। महाव्रतधरा विप्रा मम भक्तिपरायणाः।। 53।।
एते प्राप्ताश्च देवत्वं मम सान्निध्यमेव च। मालवो भार्यया सार्द्धं मत्क्षेत्रं परिगृह्य वै।। 54।।
ete ca viprā niyataṃ mama bhaktā yaśasvinaḥ /
śrotracchidraṃ yathāhatya śaṃkubhirvai parasparam //
śroṣyāmo naiva cānyadvai hareḥ kīrti vineti ye /
mahāvratadharā viprā mama bhaktiparāyaṇāḥ //
ete prāptāśca devatvaṃ mama sānnidhyameva ca /
mālavo bhāryayā sārddhaṃ matkṣetraṃ parigṛhya vai //

These glorious and famous Brāhmins are my devotees. They had pierced their ears with iron nails voluntarily and had vowed to each other (52) that none of them would hear anything except the glories and virtues of Hari being sung. Hence, let these exalted and virtuous Brāhmins, who have stood fast and victorious in their great vows and who are my sincere devotees and followers (53), attain the exalted stature which is reserved for Gods. Let them have a residence near me. Let them be accompanied by Mālava and his chaste and dutiful wife while they stay in my place here in Vaikuṇṭha (54). [52-54]

मानमानादिंभिर्नित्यमभ्यर्च्य सततं हि माम्। गानं शृणोति नियतो मत्कीर्तिचरितान्वितम्।। 55।।
तेनासौ प्राप्तवाँल्लोकं मम ब्रह्मन् सनातनम्।। 55½।।
mānamānādiṃbhirnityamabhyarcya satataṃ hi mām /
gānaṃ śṛṇoti niyato matkīrticaritānvitam //
tenāsau prāptavām̐llokaṃ mama brahman sanātanam /

Let them eternally stay here with great respect and honour. Let them constantly worship me, honour me and sing and hear about my divine glories and divine deeds (55). Oh Brāhmin (Brahmā)! This is the reason why they have obtained my abode which is eternal and truthful. [That is, since they have been faithfully singing and hearing my glories being sung while they were on earth and had to suffer because of this stern vow, they have been able to obtain my abode, an achievement which is most difficult for a human being to achieve.] (55½). [55-55½]

पद्माक्षोऽसौ महाभागः कौशिकस्य महात्मनः।। 56।।
धनेशत्वमवाप्तोऽसौ मम सान्निध्यमेव च।। 56½।।
padmākṣo'sau mahābhāgaḥ kauśikasya mahātmanaḥ //
dhaneśatvamavāpto'sau mama sānnidhyameva ca /

This Padmākṣa is a very fortunate disciple of the great sage Kauśika. Let him become the guardian of wealth and stay near me in my abode' (56-56½).

एवमुक्त्वा हरिस्तत्र समास्ते लोकपूजितः।। 57।।
ततो हरिर्भक्तजनैः समावृतः सुखेन तस्थौ कनकासने शुभे।
भक्तैकगम्यो निजभक्तलोकान्सलालयन्पाणिसरोरुहेण।। 58।।
evamuktvā haristatra samāste lokapūjitaḥ //
tato harirbhaktajanaiḥ samāvṛtaḥ sukhena tasthau kanakāsane śubhe /
bhaktaikagamyo nijabhaktalokānsalālayanpāṇisaroruheṇa //

Having said so, Śrī Hari (Viṣṇu), who is worshipped, adored, honoured and revered by the whole world, sat happily and cheerfully on the golden heavenly throne along with his devotees. He showed great love and affection to them and took care of them with his lotus-like hands which are worthy of being respectfully and reverentially seen and adored by his devotees (57-58).

Thus ends Canto 5 of this great epic Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa written by sage Vālmīki describing how the devotees of Viṣṇu, sages Kauśika and others, attained salvation and residence in the abode of the Lord.

* * *

Canto 6

Nārada curses Lakṣmī; the episode Hari Mitra and the Owl

Viṣṇu organised a music festival to honour Kauśika and other devotees who had attained his abode as described in the previous Canto. Viṣṇu had invited a renowned singer named Tamburu to sing on the occasion. There was a huge jostling and shuffling crowed of Gods and other heavenly residents, and in order to restore order, Viṣṇu's guards pushed them out. In the melee and confusion that followed, Lakṣmī's maids shoved Nārada, and feeling insulted and humiliated, he cursed her to take birth on the earth from the womb of a demoness and cast out like an unwanted, illegitimate child. After the curse, when his anger subsided, Nārada was very remorseful and contrite. Viṣṇu advised him to go to the Owl who was the music teacher for the Gods and learn singing from him if he wished to have the same honour that was shown to Kauśika and Tamburu.

Nārada went to the Owl named Gānabandhu residing in the Himālayas where that expert musician told him about his earlier life when he was a king and had misbehaved with a devotee of Lord Viṣṇu named Hari Mitra because the latter had violated the king's mandate that no one should sing devotional songs in the honour of Viṣṇu in his kingdom because only the sared hymns of the Vedas are meant for honouring the supreme 'God', and ordinary singing of prayers of any other deity was demeaning to Vedas as will as the supreme God. The king's guards had defiled his worship, and as a result, the king became an Owl upon his death and was punished to feed upon his own dead body for a long time, then become a dog and latter on a human being. Meanwhile, Hari Mitra had become a divine resident of the heaven. When Hari Mitra found out about the misfortunes that had fallen upon the king, he gracefully blessed him and remitted the punishment that was inflicted upon the latter for insulting and humiliating the former who was great devotee of Viṣṇu.

तस्मिन्क्षणे समारब्धो मधुराक्षरपेशलैः। महामहोत्सवस्तत्र कौशिकप्रीतयेऽद्भुतः।। 1।।
tasminkṣaṇe samārabdho madhurākṣarapeśalaiḥ /
mahāmahotsavastatra kauśikaprītaye'dbhutaḥ //

At that time, in honour of Kauśika, a great and marvelous festival was organised by Viṣṇu in which melodious songs with fascinating and charming lyrics were sung (1).

विपञ्चीगुणतत्त्वज्ञैर्वाद्यविद्याविशारदैः। ततस्तच्छ्रवणायालं चेटीकोटिसमावृत्ता।। 2।।
vipañcīguṇatattvajñairvādyavidyāviśāradaiḥ /
tatastacchravaṇāyālaṃ ceṭīkoṭisamāvṛttā //

Millions of celestial maids had assembled there to hear acclaimed musicians who were very skilled and expert in the art of playing the Indian lute besides other musical instruments (2).

गायमाना समायाता लक्ष्मीर्विष्णुपरिग्रहः। वृत्ता सहस्त्रकोटिभिर्वेत्रपाणिभिराशुगैः।। 3।।
gāyamānā samāyātā lakṣmīrviṣṇuparigrahaḥ /
vṛttā sahasrakoṭibhirvetrapāṇibhirāśugaiḥ //

The divine consort of Viṣṇu, Goddess Lakṣmī, came to the venue, singing cheerfully. She was escorted (or surrounded) by thousands and thousands of her maids (lady attendants) holding batons and canes to protect her (3).

ब्रह्मादिसुरसंघानां घनं दृष्ट्वा समागमम्। चेटीगणाधिपा रुष्टा भुशुण्डीपरिघान्विताः।। 4।।
brahmādisurasaṃghānāṃ ghanaṃ dṛṣṭvā samāgamam /
ceṭīgaṇādhipā ruṣṭā bhuśuṇḍīparighānvitāḥ //

Seeing the huge milling crowd of jostling and shuffling Gods and other celestial residents accompanied by Brahmā (the patriarch, the creator), the commander of Viṣṇu's guards, who were holding their weapons called 'Bhuṣuṇḍī and Parigha' (i.e. lancets, spears, spikes and other such ancient weapons), became annoyed because the crowd was getting restless and unmanageable (4).

ब्रह्मादींस्तर्जयन्त्यस्तान्मुनींश्चापि समन्ततः। उत्सार्यदूरं संहृष्टा विष्ठिताः पर्वतोपमाः।। 5।।
सर्वे बहिर्विनिर्याताः सार्द्धं वै ब्रह्मणा सुराः। युक्तमित्येव भाषन्तः प्रभोरग्रे वयं तु के।। 6।।

brahmādīṃstarjayantyastānmunīṃścāpi samantataḥ /
utsāryadūraṃ saṃhṛṣṭā viṣṭhitāḥ parvatopamāḥ //
sarve bahirviniryātāḥ sārddha vai brahmaṇā surāḥ /
yuktamityeva bhāṣantaḥ prabhoragre vayaṃ tu ke //

They objected to Brahmā and other holy sages/Gods from sitting there and took them away to some place at a distance from the dais and made them respectfully sit there (5).

Though they were taken out from the main stage and relocated outside, Brahmā and other sages/Gods did not take umbrage/offence because they said it was alright as they were very humble in front of the Lord (Viṣṇu) (6). [5-6]

तस्थुः प्राञ्जलयः सर्वे त्रिदशागत मन्यवः। तस्मिन्क्षणे समाहूतस्तुम्बुरुर्मानपूर्वकम्।। 7।।

tasthuḥ prāñjalayaḥ sarve tridaśāgata manyavaḥ /
tasminkṣaṇe samāhūtastumburumānapūrvakam //

That is why none of the sages/Gods became annoyed and angry or felt humiliated and insulted in any way. They stood with joined hands. Right at that time, (a famous and expert singer named) Tamburu was called in with great honour (7).

प्रविवेश समीपं वै देव्या देवस्य चैव हि। तत्रासीनो यथायोगं नानामूर्च्छाक्षरान्वितम्।। 8।।
जगौ कलपदं हृष्टो विपञ्चीं चाप्यवादयत्। विष्णुना कौशिकप्रीत्यै प्रत्युक्तौ गायकोत्तमः।। 9।।

praviveśa samīpaṃ vai devyā devasya caiva hi /
tatrāsīno yathāyogaṃ nānāmūrcchākṣarānvitam //
jagau kalapadaṃ hṛṣṭo vipañcīṃ cāpyavādayat /
viṣṇunā kauśikaprītyai pratyuktau gāyakottamaḥ //

He came to the presiding God and Goddess of the function (in this case, Lord Viṣṇu and Goddess Lakṣmī) and sat down on the designated seat reserved for him. He sang in different ways on the Indian lute, employing all the 7 notes of Indian classical music, first in an ascending order and then in the descending tone. He sang most cheerfully with an exhilarated and ecstatic heart. Viṣṇu had invited this excellent singer to please and honour Kauśika (or, he had organised this musical fest to celebrate the occasion of Kauśika coming to heaven) (8-9).

[Note :—The 7 notes of Indian classical music are the following— Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni.]

नानारत्नसमायुक्तैर्दिव्यैराभरणोत्तमैः। दिव्यमालैश्च वसनैः पूजितो विष्णुमन्दिरात्।। 10।।
निर्गतस्तुम्बुरुर्हृष्टो जगाम स यथागतम्। ब्रह्माद्यास्त्रिदशाः सर्वे मुनयश्च यथागतम्।। 11।।
जग्मुर्विष्णुं प्रणम्योच्चैर्जयेति भाषिणस्ततः।। 11½।।

nānāratnasamāyuktairdivyairābharaṇottamaiḥ /
divyamālaiśca vasanaiḥ pūjito viṣṇumandirāt //
nirgatastumbururhṛṣṭo jagāma sa yathāgatam /
brahmādyāstridaśāḥ sarve munayaśca yathāgatam //
jagmurviṣṇuṃ praṇamyoccairjayeti bhāṣiṇastataḥ /

He was honoured by gifts of different varieties of gems and jewels, and was adorned by magnificent ornaments, garlands and ceremonial robes of honour. After being thus worshipped, honoured and shown due greatest of respect in the divine palace of Viṣṇu (10), he (Tamburu) came out very happy and satisfied and went away to his place most cheerfully. Brahmā and other Gods and sages also paid their obeisance to Viṣṇu, sang prayers in his honour, bowed respectfully before him and hailed him as they departed from there for their own respective places (11½). [10-11½]

नारदोऽथ मुनिर्दृष्ट्वा तुम्बुरोः सत्क्रियां हरेः।। 12।।
शोकाविष्टेन मनसा संतप्तहृदयेक्षणः। चिन्तामापेदिवांस्तत्र शोकमूर्च्छाकुलान्तरः।। 13।।

nārado'tha munirdṛṣṭvā tumburoḥ satkriyāṃ hareḥ //
śokāviṣṭena manasā saṃtaptahṛdayekṣaṇaḥ /
cintāmāpedivāṃstatra śokamūrcchākulāntaraḥ //

Nārada saw Tamburu being shown such great honour and respect by Hari (Viṣṇu) himself, and he could not stomach or tolerate it (because of the feeling of jealousy). He was overcome with anguish and grief and his heart was tormented with as sense of humiliation and insult. He started worrying and feeling annoyed, peeved and embarrassed (12-13).

ततः क्रोधेन महता जज्वाल मुनिपुङ्गवः। लक्ष्मीं शशाप सहसा तद्दासीभिस्तिरस्कृतः।। 14।।

tataḥ krodhena mahatā jajvāla munipuṅgavaḥ /
lakṣmīṃ śaśāpa sahasā taddāsībhistiraskṛtaḥ //

As a consequence, that great sage (Nārada) became very enraged and flared up in anger. When he was somehow shown disrespect by the maid attendants of Lakṣmī, he immediately cursed her (Lakṣmī) (14).

[Note :—In all probabilities, when Brahmā and other Gods had gone away from there and even Tamburu had left the place, Viṣṇu had almost neglected Nārada. The latter expected that Viṣṇu would pay special attention to him, and though Tamburu was shown official respect, Nārada expected Viṣṇu to at least call him near and show some basic courtesy to him by offering a garland and a pleasant smile in the least. But when Viṣṇu did not pay any attention to him, he must have moved closer to Lakṣmī to complain. In the process, Lakṣmī's guards must have pushed him away from approaching her. This added fuel to the fire of Nārada's anger, and he lost all control and cursed Lakṣmī.]

यदहं राक्षसं भावं गृहीत्वा विष्णु कान्तया। चेटीभिर्वारितो दूरं वेत्राघातेन ताडितः।। 15।।
तस्मात्सञ्जायतां लक्ष्मीं रक्षसां गर्भसम्भवा। यतोऽहं बहिराक्षिप्तश्चेटीभिः सावहेलनम्।। 16।।
हेलया राक्षसी च त्वां बहिः क्षेप्स्यति भूतले।। 16½।।

yadahaṃ rākṣasaṃ bhāvaṃ gṛhītvā viṣṇu kāntayā /
ceṭībhirvārito dūraṃ vetrāghātena tāḍitaḥ //
tasmātsañjāyatāṃ lakṣmīṃ rakṣasāṃ garbhasambhavā /
yato'haṃ bahirākṣiptaśceṭībhiḥ sāvahelanam //
helayā rākṣasī ca tvāṃ bahiḥ kṣepsyati bhūtale /

He said most indignantly, 'I was invited here by Viṣṇu (and I have not come uninvited), but his wife (Lakṣmī) has treated me with disdain as if I was some evil and hateful and unwanted demon. Her attendants pushed me away and I was tormented and insulted by being struck by their canes or sticks (15).

Hence, I curse that Lakṣmī would be born from the womb of a demoness. Besides this, the way I was unceremoniously and contemptuously pushed out by her maids (16), she too would be thrown out scornfully to the ground by that demoness' (16½). [15-16½]

इत्युक्तै नारदेनाथ चकम्पे भुवनत्रयम्।। 17।।
हाहाकारं ततश्चक्रुर्देवगन्धर्वदानवाः। नारदो विललापाथ धिग्धिङ मामिति च ब्रुवन्।। 18।।

ityuktai nāradenātha cakampe bhuvanatrayam //
hāhākāraṃ tataścakrurdevagandharvadānavāḥ /
nārado vilalāpātha dhigdhiṅa māmiti ca bruvan //

When Nārada made this horrible and ignoble curse, all the 3 worlds shook and trembled in horror (17). All the Gods, Gandharvas (celestial musicians; a type of junior Gods) and Dānavas (demonic or evil spirits) were filled with consternation and awe, and they lamented in dismay and distress. When his anger subsided, Nārada was overcome with severe contrition and regret; he cursed himself with contempt and felt very sorry, dismayed and distressed. He lamented most distraughtfully and woefully, and said— (17-18).

नारायणसमायोगो महालक्ष्मीसमीपतः। अहो तुम्बुरुणा प्राप्तोधिङ्मा मूढमचेतनम्।। 19।।
योऽयं हरेः सन्निकासाद्दूतैर्निर्वासितः कथम्। जीवन्यास्यामि कुत्राहं किं मे तुम्बुरुणाकृतम्।। 20।।
रोदमानो मुहुर्विद्वान्धिङ्मामिति च चिन्तयन्।। 20½।।

nārāyaṇasamāyogo mahālakṣmīsamīpataḥ /
aho tumburuṇā prāptodhiṅmā mūḍhamacetanam //
yo'yaṃ hareḥ sannikāsāddūtairnirvāsitaḥ katham /
jīvanyāsyāmi kutrāhaṃ kiṃ me tumburuṇākṛtam //
rodamāno muhurvidvāndhiṅmāmiti ca cintayan /

'I was humiliated in front of Tamburu while Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī were present in the vicinity. Shame to me and my honour and self respect that I am so foolish enough to still live with this dishonour and shame on my face (19). I was insultingly ejected out from the main venue, even though Hari (Viṣṇu) was present nearby, by his guards and attendants. Say, where can I go alive, or with what face should I live amongst the Gods and the sages, after being subjected to such a great humiliation and insult at the hands of Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī ? Oh Tamburu! What have you done !' (20).

Lamenting and regretting woefully thus, that wise one (Nārada) was in a very dejected and depressed mood (20½). [19-20½]

ततो नारायणो लक्ष्म्याः शापं श्रुत्वा सुदारुणम्।। 21।।
लक्ष्म्या सह हृषीकेश आजगाम यतो मुनिः। रमां प्रसाद्य तं विप्रं प्रत्युवाच कृताञ्जलिः।। 22।।

tato nārāyaṇo lakṣmyāḥ śāpaṃ śrutvā sudāruṇam //
lakṣmyā saha hṛṣīkeśa ājagāma yato muniḥ /
ramāṃ prasādya taṃ vipraṃ pratyuvāca kṛtāñjaliḥ //

Meanwhile, when Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu) heard about Nārada's horrible curse for Lakṣmī (21), Hṛṣīkeśa (one of the names of Viṣṇu) took her along and came to the sage (to ask for forgiveness). Lakṣmī praised the sage and showed him due respect with joined hands and said to him—(22). [21-22]

यदुक्तं भवता मह्यं तत्तथा न तदन्यथा। तत्र किंचित्प्रार्थयामि मुने तत्कृपया कुरु।। 23।।
आरण्यानां मुनीनां वै स्तोकं स्तोकं च शोणितम्। कलसापूरितं भक्षेद्राक्षसी या च कामतः।। 24।।
तस्या गर्भे भविष्यामि तच्छोणितसमुद्भवा।। 24½।।

yaduktaṃ bhavatā mahyaṃ tattathā na tadanyathā /
tatra kiṃcitprārthayāmi mune tatkṛpayā kuru //
āraṇyānāṃ munīnāṃ vai stokaṃ stokaṃ ca śoṇitam /
kalasāpūritaṃ bhakṣedrākṣasī yā ca kāmataḥ //
tasyā garbhe bhaviṣyāmi tacchoṇitasamudbhavā /

'Whatever you have said for me shall not go in vain (i.e. your words would be fulfilled). But still, oh great sage, I pray to you to be kind and graceful towards me (23). Bless me with this additional boon—'Let one drop of blood of each of the sages, seers, ascetics and hermits who live in the forest be kept or stored in a pitcher till it is full. Any demoness who drinks this blood out of her own free will (24), let me be born from her womb' (24½). [23-24½]

इत्युक्तं रमयाचिन्त्या सम्भवान्नो भवेदिति।। 25।।
नारदस्तु तथेत्याह अस्याः सर्व हि दारुणम्।। 25½।।

ityuktaṃ ramayācintyā sambhavānno bhavediti //
nāradastu tathetyāha asyāḥ sarva hi dāruṇam /

When Rāma (Lakṣmī) requested that above circumstance is made possible for her birth as destined due to the curse of the sage (25), Nārada replied, 'All these will be too harsh for you' (25½). [25-25½]

ततो नारायणो देवः प्रोक्तवान्नारदं मुनिम्।। 26।।
नाहं दानैर्न तपसा नेज्यया नापि तीर्थतः। सन्तुष्यामि द्विजेश्रेष्ठ यथा नाम्नां प्रकीर्तनात्।। 27।।
गानेन नामगुणयोर्मम सायुज्यमाप्नुयात्। निदर्शनं कौशिकोऽत्र गानान्मल्लोकमाप्तवान्।। 28।।

tato nārāyaṇo devaḥ proktavānnāradaṃ munim //
nāhaṃ dānairna tapasā nejyayā nāpi tīrthataḥ /
santuṣyāmi dvijeśreṣṭha yathā nāmnāṃ prakīrtanāt //
gānena nāmaguṇayormama sāyujyamāpnuyāt /
nidarśanaṃ kauśiko'tra gānānmallokamāptavān //

Then Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu) said to Nārada, 'Oh sage! (26) I am not pleased as much by charities, Tapa (doing austerity, penance and keeping of stern religious vows), honour and praise as well as by going on pilgrimage, as I am by singing or chanting my name individually or in chorus in a group (i.e. doing Kīrtana). Oh exalted sage! (27) Those who sing my holy name and divine glories are able to find an abode in my heaven near me. Kauśika is a living example of this; he has attained my abode by singing my name with great devotion (28). [26-28].

मूर्च्छनादियुतं गानं नाम्नामति मम प्रियम्। तम्बुरुस्तत्प्रभावेण प्रियस्त्वत्तोपि मे द्विज।। 29।।

mūrcchanādiyutaṃ gānaṃ nāmnāmati mama priyam /
tamburustatprabhāveṇa priyastvattopi me dvija //

Those who sing the glories of my divine name using all the 7 modes and notes of Indian classical music are very endearing to me. That is the reason, oh Brāhmin, that Tamburu is dearer to me as compare to you (29).

मूर्च्छनातालयोगेन गानेन त्वं तथा भव। उलूकं पश्य गत्वा त्वं यदि गाने मतिस्तव।। 30।।

mūrcchanātālayogena gānena tvaṃ tathā bhava /
ulūkaṃ paśya gatvā tvaṃ yadi gāne matistava //

You should also sing similarly employing all the modes and notes of classical music, besides using precise beats and rhythm to sing, and attain the same stature (as attained by Tamburu). If you have an inclination to sing and learn more about devotional music, go and see 'Ulūka' (the divine Owl) (30).

[Note :—The word 'Ulūka' has the following meaning—(i) owl, (ii) Indra, the king of Gods, (iii) one of the names of sage Kanāda or Kaṇāda, who was an expert musician and lyricist and the patron saint of musicians, lyricists and singers, (iv) the owl referred here is king Bhuvaneśa who had become an owl under a curse—see verse nos. 46-91 of this Canto below.]

मानसोत्तरशैले तु गानबन्धुरिति स्मृतः। तद्गच्छ शीघ्रं शैलेन्द्रं गानवांस्त्वं भविष्यसि।। 31।।

mānasottaraśaile tu gānabandhuriti smṛtaḥ /
tadgaccha śīghraṃ śailendraṃ gānavāṃstvaṃ bhaviṣyasi //

He lives on a mountain to the north of lake Mānasarovara (the legendary lake in the Himālayas where Mt. Kailāśa, the abode of Lord Śiva, is situated), and is famously known as Gānabandhu (literally, a person who is closely attached to singing, or a person who is very fond of singing, or a person who belongs to the brotherhood of great signers). If you go to him on that mountain soon, you too would become an acclaimed singer' (31).

इत्युक्तो विस्मयाविष्टो नारदो वाग्विदां वरः। मानसोत्तरशैले तु गानबन्धुं जगाम वै।। 32।।

ityukto vismayāviṣṭo nārado vāgvidāṃ varaḥ /
mānasottaraśaile tu gānabandhuṃ jagāma vai //

When he (Viṣṇu) said this, Nārada became amazed and mystified though he was considered the senior most amongst orators and those who were wise, clever and deft in the use of words. [That is, Nārada had thought up till now he was a good speaker, was constantly 'singing' the glories of the Lord on his lute which he always carried with him, and in his foolish ignorance he had imagined that there could be no one else who would be wiser, more devoted and a better singer of prayers than him. When Viṣṇu chastened him by lauding Tamburu's and Gānabandhu's acumen at singing devotional songs, Nārada was stunned and dumbfounded. His entire ego collapsed like a punctured balloon.] So he went to Gānabandhu on the mountains north of Mānasasarovara (32).

गन्धर्वाः किन्नरा यक्षास्तथा चाप्सरसां गणाः। समासीनास्तु परितो गानबन्धुश्च मध्यतः।। 33।।

gandharvāḥ kinnarā yakṣāstathā cāpsarasāṃ gaṇāḥ /
samāsīnāstu parito gānabandhuśca madhyataḥ //

Groups of Gandharvas (senior celestial musicians), Kinnaras (celestial dancers and singers), Yakṣas (semi-Gods who are attendants of Kubera) and Apsarās (celestial damsels and courtesans of Indra's court) surrounded Gānabandhu. He was seated in their midst like a teacher surrounded by his students (33).

गानशिक्षासमापन्नाः शिक्षिता स्तेन पक्षिणा। स्निग्धकण्ठस्वरास्तत्र समासीना मुदान्विता।। 34।।

gānaśikṣāsamāpannāḥ śikṣitā stena pakṣiṇā /
snigdhakaṇṭhasvarāstatra samāsīnā mudānvitā //

He was talented in the art and craft of skillful music and he was an unchallenged expert in it. He had even taught many birds in the art of singing. Numerous birds with a sweet, pleasant, charming, enthralling and enchanting melodious voice (or throat) were cheerfully present there (hopping around and chirping merrily away, chattering in merriment and ecstasy) (34).

[Note :—Numerous birds have a very sweet and captivating sound emanating from their throats. For example, the bird cuckoo, parrot, blackbird, peacock, the house sparrow etc. Some birds speak so loudly that their voice resonates and is heard for long distances (e.g. peacock), some speak very softly (e.g. the house sparrow, black bird), some learn to mimic human voice (e.g. parrot), some speak in an awe inspiring voice which create and aura of darkness (e.g. owl), some speak in a grunt (e.g. pigeons), some speak in a crowing manner (e.g. a crow) and so on and so forth. According to legend, a king named Bhuvaneśa was in the form of an owl—see verse nos. 46-91, and he was a patron saint of singers, especially non-human singers.]

ततो नारदमालोक्य गानबन्धुरुवाच ह। प्रणिपत्य यथा न्यायं स्वागतेनाभ्यपूजयेत्।। 35।।
किमर्थं भगवन्नत्र चागतोऽसि महाद्युते। किं कार्यं हि महाब्रह्मन्ब्रूहि किं करवाणि ते।। 36।।

tato nāradamālokya gānabandhuruvāca ha /
praṇipatya yathā nyāyaṃ svāgatenābhyapūjayet //
kimarthaṃ bhagavannatra cāgato'si mahādyute /
kiṃ kāryaṃ hi mahābrahmanbrūhi kiṃ karavāṇi te //

When Gānabandhu saw Nārada coming, he duly bowed before the celestial sage with reverence and welcomed him by worshipping him. Then he asked the sage (35) 'Oh the most glorious and radiant Lord (Nārada) ! Say, why have you come here to me? Oh the great and exalted Brāhmin ! What is your work? Tell me what can I do for you?' (36). [35-36]

तच्छ्रुत्वा नारदो धीमान्प्रत्युवाच सपक्षिणम्। उलूकेन्द्र महाप्राज्ञ शृणु सर्वं यथातथम्।। 37।।
मम वृत्तं प्रवक्ष्यामि तच्च भूतं महाद्भुतम्।। 37½।।

tacchrutvā nārado dhīmānpratyuvāca sapakṣiṇam /
ulūkendra mahāprājña śṛṇu sarvaṃ yathātatham //
mama vṛttaṃ pravakṣyāmi tacca bhūtaṃ mahādbhutam /

Hearing this, the intelligent and wise sage Nārada said to the king amongst birds (i.e. the owl called Gānabandhu), 'Oh the most exalted, wise, erudite, sagacious and scholarly owl ! Listen to everything as it happened with me (37). I shall narrate to you the amazing and strange sequence of things that have happened to me and the circumstances that which I had to go through (37½). [37-37½]

वैकुण्ठनगरेब्रह्मन्नारायणसमीपगम् ।। 38 ।।
मां विनिर्धूय संहृष्टं समाहूय च तुम्बुरुम्। लक्ष्मीसमन्वितो विष्णुश्शृणोद्गानमुत्तमम्।। 39 ।।
ब्रह्मादयो वयं सर्वे निरस्ताः स्थानतश्च्युताः। कौशिकाद्याः समासीना गानयोगेन वै हरिम्।। 40 ।।

vaikuṇṭhanagarebrahmannārāyaṇasamīpagam //
māṃ vinirdhūya saṃhṛṣṭaṃ samāhūya ca tumburum /
lakṣmīsamanvito viṣṇuśṛṇodgānamuttamam //
brahmādayo vayaṃ sarve nirastāḥ sthānataścyutāḥ /
kauśikādyāḥ samāsīnā gānayogena vai harim //

In the celestial city of Vaikuṇṭha of Nārāyaṇa Brahma (Viṣṇu) (38), I was subjected to humiliation and insult and was demeaned by being relegated to the sidelines (in a music festival organised by Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī in honour of a sage called Kauśika), and Tamburu was invited and felicitated publically. Viṣṇu, along with Lakṣmī, heard him singing beautiful songs (but neglected me, though I was invited and am always singing Viṣṇu's divine glories on my lute) (39). Brahmā, the creator, and other Gods and sages, including myself, were pushed out of the place (see verse nos. 5-6), while Kauśika and others were allowed to remain seated close to Hari (40). [38-40]

समाराध्यैव सम्प्राप्ता गाणपत्यं यथासुखम्। तेनाहमतिदुःखर्तो यत्तप्तं तु मया तपः।। 41 ।।
यद्दत्तं यद्धुतं चैव यच्चापि श्रुतमेव हि। यदधीतं च गानस्य कलां नार्हति षोडशीम्।। 42 ।।

samārādhyaiva samprāptā gāṇapatyaṃ yathāsukham /
tenāhamatiduḥkharto yattaptaṃ tu mayā tapaḥ //
yaddattaṃ yaddhutaṃ caiva yaccāpi śrutameva hi /
yadadhītaṃ ca gānasya kalāṃ nārhati ṣoḍaśīm //

He (Kauśika) was cheerfully bestowed with great honour and a title of being 'chief of the Viṣṇu's attendants' by the virtue of his devotion for the Lord. At this, I am feeling extremely perturbed, tormented, anguished and aggrieved (because I am also a great singer and devotee of Viṣṇu, and no such honour was ever shown to me). Whatever Tapa (severe austerity, penance, keeping of stern religious vows) (41), charity and religious sacrifices, including fire sacrifices, that I have done, whatever I have learnt or heard and studied, are no match for even a sixteenth fraction of the art of singing and music (because it appears Viṣṇu is more pleased by this than anything else)! (42). [41-42]

विष्णोर्माहात्म्ययुक्तस्य गानयोगस्य वै ततः। पश्चात्तापं च मे दृष्ट्वा मां च नारायणोऽब्रवीत्।। 43।।
उलूकं गच्छ देवर्षे गानबन्धुं मतिर्यदि। गाने च वर्तते ब्रह्मंस्तत्र त्वं गानमाप्स्यसि।। 44।।

viṣṇormāhātmyayuktasya gānayogasya vai tataḥ/
paścāttāpaṃ ca me dṛṣṭvā māṃ ca nārāyaṇo'bravīt//
ulūkaṃ gaccha devarṣe gānabandhuṃ matiryadi/
gāne ca vartate brahmaṃstatra tvaṃ gānamāpsyasi//

When Nārāyaṇa saw me in a remorseful and depressed mood full of regret and contrition when I reckoned the importance, significance and impact of that singing soaked in great devotion and lauding the divine glory of the Lord (Viṣṇu), (a type of singing that I lacked), he said to me to assuage my ruffled feelings and also to reassure me (43), 'Oh the sage of the Gods (or, the celestial sage) ! If you are sincerely interested in singing (to please me with your deotional singing), go to Ulūka known as Gānabandhu (see verse nos. 30-31 above). He is a most wise teacher of music, and you shall get to learn proper singing methods from him at his place (44). [43-44]

इत्यहंप्रेषितस्तेन त्वत्समीपमिहागतः। किं करिष्यामि शिष्योऽहं तव मां पालयाव्यय।। 45।।

ityahaṃpreṣitastena tvatsamīpamihāgataḥ/
kiṃ kariṣyāmi śiṣyo'haṃ tava māṃ pālayāvyaya//

This is how I have come to you at his behest and inspiration. Oh the imperishable one ! Accept me as one of your disciples and look after me and take care of me. Please teach me the intricacies of proper singing' (45).

नारदं प्राह धर्मात्मा गानबन्धुर्महायशाः। शृणु नारद यद्वृत्तं पुरा मम महामते।। 46।।
अत्याश्चर्यसमायुक्तं सर्वपापहरं शुभम्।। 46½।।

nāradaṃ prāha dharmātmā gānabandhurmahāyaśāḥ/
śṛṇu nārada yadvṛttaṃ purā mama mahāmate//
atyāścaryasamāyuktaṃ sarvapāpaharaṃ śubham/

The most acclaimed and renowned Gānabandhu, who was a righteous and virtuous soul, said to Nārada, 'Oh wise Nārada ! Listen to my history (46). It is very fascinating and strange indeed; it is a dispeller of all sins and it is very auspicious to hear (46½). [46-46½]

भुवनेश इति ख्यातो राजाभूद्धार्मिकः पुरा।। 47।।
अश्वमेधसहस्त्रैश्च वाजपेयायुतेन च। अन्यैश्च विविधैर्यज्ञैरिष्ट्वान्भूरिदक्षिणैः।। 48।।

bhuvaneśa iti khyāto rājābhūddhārmikaḥ purā //
aśvamedhasahasraiśca vājapeyāyutena ca /
anyaiśca vividhairyajñairiṣṭvānbhūridakṣiṇaiḥ //

In an ancient time, there was a famous king called Bhuvaneśa. He was righteous, virtuous and noble. He had successfully done 1000 Aśvamedha Yajñas (horse sacrifices), 10,000 Vājapeya Yajña and many other religious rituals entailing huge charities and done with great devotion (47-48).

[Note :—The two fire sacrifices referred here—the horse sacrifice and Vājapeya Yajña—have been described earlier in Canto 1, verse no. 46.]

गवां कोट्यर्बुदं चैव सुवर्णस्य तथैव च। वाससां रथनागानां कन्याश्वनां तथैव च।। 49।।
दत्त्वा स राजा विप्रेभ्यो मेदिनीं पर्यपालयत्। न्यवारयत्स्वके राज्ये गानयोगेन केशवम्।। 50।।

gavāṃ koṭyarbudaṃ caiva suvarṇasya tathaiva ca /
vāsasāṃ rathanāgānāṃ kanyāśvanāṃ tathaiva ca //
dattvā sa rājā viprebhyo medinīṃ paryapālayat /
nyavārayatsvake rājye gānayogena keśavam //

Millions of cows, millions and millions worth of gold, huge quantities of clothes and robes, chariots and other vehicles, unmarried girls (called Kanyās) and innumerable horses were donated by that noble king to Brāhmins. He ruled over the realm most dutifully and according to religious sanctions, but unfortunately he prohibited/ prescribed the singing of the glories of Keśava (Viṣṇu) in his kingdom (50). [49-50]

[Note :—The 'unmarried girls' or virgins referred above perhaps mean he used to marry off poor unmarried girls of marriageable age by state funds in a mass marriage ceremony held simultaneously with fire sacrifices. In Hindu tradition, marriage of girl is considered a very holy and charitable deed, and a person who finances such marriages is deemed to be doing a great religious activity.]

अन्यं वा गानयोगेन गायेद्यदि स मे भवेत्। बध्यः स्वात्मना तस्माद्वैदैरीड्यः परः पुमान्।। 51।।
न ब्राह्मणैश्च गातव्यं महद्भिर्वेदमुत्तमम्। गानयोगेन सर्वत्र स्त्रियो गायन्तु मां सदा।। 52।।

anyaṃ vā gānayogena gāyedyadi sa me bhavet /
badhyaḥ svātmanā tasmādvaidairīḍyāḥ paraḥ pumān //
na brāhmaṇaiśca gātavyaṃ mahadbhirvedamuttamam /
gānayogena sarvatra striyo gāyantu māṃ sadā //

The king ordained, 'Anyone who uses music and song as a means to pray the Lord (Viṣṇu) will be killed by me, because the supreme, transcendental Lord is to be worshipped using only the words or hymns of the Vedas (and not by songs or poetry composed by ordinary men) (51). Most exalted and wise Brāhmins who are learned in the Vedas should not sing ordinary songs (because they should sing only the glories of the Lord using the hymns of the Vedas). Singing girls or women folk should always sing my laurels everywhere in the kingdom, should they wish to sing a song at all (52). [51-52]

[Note :—The hymns of the Vedas are chanted and sung by Brāhmins and are not supposed to be sung by women and non-Brāhmins. So, the king actually meant that Brāhmins should sing the praises of the Lord but the rest of the people should only sing the king's glories like they are being sung by royal bards and minstrels.]

सूतमागधसंघाश्च गीतं मे कारयन्तु वै। इत्याज्ञाप्य महातेजा राज्यं वै पर्यपालयत्।। 53 ।।

sūtamāgadhasaṃghāśca gītaṃ me kārayantu vai /
ityājñāpya mahātejā rājyaṃ vai paryapālayat //

Let the 'Sūta and Māgadha' (royal bards and minstrels) sing only my glories'. Making this royal proclamation, that glorious king reigned over his kingdom (53).

तस्य राज्ञः पुराभ्याशे हरिमित्र इति स्मृतः। ब्राह्मणो विष्णुभक्तश्च सर्वद्वन्द्वविवर्जिता।। 54 ।।

tasya rājñaḥ purābhyāśe harimitra iti smṛtaḥ /
brāhmaṇo viṣṇubhaktaśca sarvadvandvavivarjitā //

In that kingdom there lived a devotee of Viṣṇu called Hari Mitra. He was at peace with himself (54).

नदीपुलिनमासाद्य प्रतिमाञ्च हरेः शुभाम्। समभ्यर्च्य यथाशास्त्रं घृतदध्युत्तरं बहु।। 55 ।।
मिष्ठान्नं पायसं दत्त्वा हरेरावेद्य धूपकम्। प्रणिपत्य यथान्यायं तत्र विन्यस्तमानसः।। 56 ।।
अगायत हरिं तत्र तालवीणालयान्वितम्। अतीव स्नेहसंयुक्तस्तद्गीतेनान्तरात्मना।। 57 ।।

nadīpulinamāsādya pratimāñca hareḥ śubhām /
samabhyarcya yathāśāstraṃ ghṛtadadhyuttaraṃ bahu //
miṣṭhānnaṃ pāyasaṃ dattvā harerāvedya dhūpakam /
praṇipatya yathānyāyaṃ tatra vinyastamānasaḥ //
agāyata hariṃ tatra tālavīṇālayānvitam /
atīva snehasaṃyuktastadgītenāntarātmanā //

He used to go to the bank of the river and worshipped an auspicious image (idol) of Hari there most devotedly an according to the principles and process laid down by the scriptures. He offered lots of Ghee (clarified butter), curd and whey (55), sweets and sweet puddings to Hari (Viṣṇu) besides the offerings of different perfumes, scents and fragrances. He used to prostrate before the image and pray from the deepest recesses of his heart most sincerely (56). He used to sing the glories of the Lord very melodiously and soulfully on the Indian lute; he remained ever engrossed and blissful in the memory of the Lord. He caressed his Ātmā (soul) most lovingly by singing the song in the honour of the divine and supreme Lord (Viṣṇu) (57). [55-57]

ततो राज्ञः समादेशाद्भटास्तस्य समागताः। तदर्चनादि सकलं निर्धूय च समन्ततः।। 58।।
ब्राह्मणं च गृहीत्वा ते राज्ञे सम्यङ्न्यवेदयन्।। 58½।।

tato rājñaḥ samādeśādbhaṭāstasya samāgatāḥ /
tadarcanādi sakalaṃ nirdhūya ca samantataḥ //
brāhmaṇaṃ ca gṛhītvā te rājñe samyaṅnyavedayan //

The king's soldiers and messengers came there on the king's orders. They defiled all the worship paraphernalia and brought the Brāhmin in captivity to the king (58-58½).

[Note :—We must note here that Hari Mitra used to worship his Lord in his ordinary and humble way, and did not use the hymn of the Vedas to sing the praises of the Lord as mandated by the king. This was his offense.]

ततो राजा द्विजश्रेष्ठं परिभर्त्स्य सुदुर्मना।। 59।।
राज्यान्निर्वासयामास हृत्वा सर्वधनादिकम्। प्रतिमां च हरेश्चैव नापश्यत्स यदृच्छया।। 60।।

tato rājā dvijaśreṣṭhaṃ paribhartsya sudurmanā //
rājyānnirvāsayāmāsa hṛtvā sarvadhanādikam /
pratimāṃ ca hareścaiva nāpaśyatsa yadṛcchayā //

The king was very anguished and annoyed and he severely reproached that exalted Brāhmin (59). He forfeited all the little wealth that he had and exiled him from his kingdom for breaking his edict. The king never saw an image of Hari willingly (60). [59-60]

[Note :—Verse no. 47-50 show that the king was righteous and noble and had been making great charities and doing fire sacrifices, but in his stupid ignorance he had treated Viṣṇu, the Supreme Being, with disdain and hatred as is clear in verse no. 51-53. That is why he had never seen an image of Hari.]

ततः कालेन महता कालधर्ममुपेयिवान्। लोकान्तरमनुप्राप्य उलूकं देहमाश्रितः ।। 61 ।।

tataḥ kālena mahatā kāladharmamupeyivān /
lokāntaramanuprāpya ulūkaṃ dehamāśritaḥ //

After a long time when the king's death approached, he died and became an owl in his next life (61).

सर्वत्र गच्छमानोपि भक्ष्यं किंचिन्न चाप्तवान्। क्षुधार्तश्च सदा खिन्नो यममाह सुदुःखितः ।। 62 ।।

sarvatra gacchamānopi bhakṣyaṃ kiṃcinna cāptavān /
kṣudhārtaśca sadā khinno yamamāha suduḥkhitaḥ //

He went everywhere but could not find anything to eat. Being constantly tormented by hunger, he said to Yama (the God of death)— (62).

क्षुत्पीडा वर्तते देव दुर्गतस्य सदा मम। मया पापं कृतं किंवा किं करिष्यामि वै यम।। 63 ।।

kṣutpīḍā vartate deva durgatasya sadā mama /
mayā pāpaṃ kṛtaṃ kiṃvā kiṃ kariṣyāmi vai yama //

'Oh Lord! I am being constantly tormented by hunger and hounded by distress and misery. Oh Yama! What wrong did I do or what sin did I commit, and what should I do now to remit them or atone for my misdemeanours and misdeeds?' (63).

ततस्तं धर्मराट् प्राह धर्माधर्मप्रदर्शकः। त्वया हि सुमहत्पापं कृतमज्ञानतो नृप।। 64 ।।

tatastaṃ dharmarāṭ prāha dharmādharmapradarśakaḥ /
tvayā hi sumahatpāpaṃ kṛtamajñānato nṛpa //

Then the Lord of Dharma (Yama), who can judge people following the path of righteousness or unrighteousness, said to him, 'Oh king! You have done horrendous and unpardonable sins due to your stupidity and ignorance (64).

हरिमित्रं प्रति तदा वासुदेवपरायणम्। हरिमित्रे कृतं पापं वासुदेवार्चनादिषु।। 65 ।।
तेन पापेन सम्प्राप्तः क्षुद्बोधस्त्वां सदा नृप। दानयज्ञादिकं सर्व प्रनष्टं ते नारधिप।। 66 ।।

harimitraṃ prati tadā vāsudevaparāyaṇam /
harimitre kṛtaṃ pāpaṃ vāsudevārcanādiṣu //
tena pāpena samprāptaḥ kṣudbodhastvāṃ sadā nṛpa /
dānayajñādikaṃ sarva pranaṣṭaṃ te nāradhipa //

Hari Mitra was devoted to Vāsudeva (Viṣṇu) and used to worship him. You had tormented him and created obstacles in his worship of Vāsudeva. This was a great sin that you had committed (65). Oh king! It is due to that sin of yours that you are ever tormented by hunger and pursued by distress. Oh the fallen and sinful king ! Your good deeds that you had done, such as giving alms and making charities and donations, have come to a naught, or they have been decimated and eroded by that single misdeed done by you (66). [65-66]

गीतनाट्यलयोपेतं गायमानं सदा हरिम्। हरिमित्रं समाहूय हृतवानसि तद्धनम्।। 67।।
उपहारादिकं सर्व वासुदेवस्य सन्निधौ। तब भृत्याः समाहृत्य पापं चक्रुस्तवाज्ञया।। 68।।

gītanāṭyalayopetaṃ gāyamānaṃ sadā harim /
harimitraṃ samāhūya hṛtavānasi taddhanam //
upahārādikaṃ sarva vāsudevasya sannidhau /
taba bhṛtyāḥ samāhṛtya pāpaṃ cakrustavājñayā //

You had summoned Hari Mitra who used to always sing the glories of Hari in melodious tunes and accompanying rhythms, and you had forfeited the little assets that he had (67). Whatever offerings he had made to the image of Vāsudeva, your soldiers and messengers had thrown them away contemptuously and disdainfully on your orders. This was an unimaginable and horribly sinful act that was done at your behest (see verse nos. 58-58½) (68). [67-68]

हरे कीर्तिं विना चान्यद् ब्राह्मणेन नृपोत्तम। न गेययोगे मन्तव्यं तस्मात्पापं त्वया कृतम्।। 69।।
नष्टं ते स्वर्गलोकाद्यं गच्छ पर्वतकोटरम्। पूर्वोत्सृष्टं स्वदेहं ते खाद नित्यं निकृत्य वै।। 70।।

hare kīrtiṃ vinā cānyad brāhmaṇena nṛpottama /
na geyayoge mantavyaṃ tasmātpāpaṃ tvayā kṛtam //
naṣṭaṃ te svargalokādyaṃ gaccha parvatakoṭaram /
pūrvotsṛṣṭaṃ svadehaṃ te khāda nityaṃ nikṛtya vai //

Oh exalted king ! A Brāhmin should not sing eulogies of anyone except singing the glories of Hari (Viṣṇu). So, punishing Hari Mitra for singing the praises of Lord Hari or Vāsudeva was an unpardonable offence and a great sin that you had comitted (69).

All your chances of attaining the heaven (because of the good deeds done by you and their good rewards) have therefore been made null and void, or have been literally runied. As a punishment for your misdemeanours and sinful act, you should now go to the cave of the mountain where your dead mortal body of your erstwhile form as a king is lying. You should feed upon it on a daily basis (70). [69-70]

तस्मिन्क्षीणे त्विमं देहं खाद नित्यं क्षुधान्वितः। महानिरयसंस्थस्त्वं यावन्मन्वन्तरं भवेत्।। 71 ।।
मन्वन्तरे ततोऽतीते भूम्यां त्वं श्वा भविष्यसि। ततःकालेन कियता मानुष्यमनुलप्स्यसे।। 72 ।।

tasminkṣīṇe tvimaṃ dehaṃ khāda nityaṃ kṣudhānvitaḥ /
mahānirayasaṃsthastvaṃ yāvanmanvantaraṃ bhavet //
manvantare tato'tīte bhūmyāṃ tvaṃ śvā bhaviṣyasi /
tataḥkālena kiyatā mānuṣyamanulapsyase //

Overcome and tormented by hunger, you must nibble at that steadily decaying and rotting body of yours daily for a period of 1 Manvantara and suffer the horrors of a horrible hell (71). At the end of that period, you will become a dog on earth. After a long time there, you would get a human body once again' (72). [71-72]

[Note :—1 Manvantara = a cycle of 71 four Yugas. These Yugas are Sat, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali. The word also means 1/14 part of 1 day of Brahmā.]

एवमुक्त्वा यमौ विद्वांस्तत्रैवान्तरधीयत। सोऽहं नारद भूपालः पुरेदानीमुलूकताम्।। 73 ।।
लब्धवान्कर्मदोषेण हरिमित्रकृतेन वै। ततो मानसशैलेऽहं कोटरे ह्यवसं मुने।। 74 ।।

evamuktvā yamau vidvāṃstatraivāntaradhīyata /
so'haṃ nārada bhūpālaḥ puredānīmulūkatām //
labdhavānkarmadoṣeṇa harimitrakṛtena vai /
tato mānasaśaile'haṃ koṭare hyavasaṃ mune //

Saying so, the wise God of Dharma, Yama, vanished from sight from there. Oh Nārada! I am that king who has become an owl (73). I have suffered from the consequences of my lowly, sinful, pervert and wicked deeds against the devout Hari Mitra. Oh sage! After that, I began to pass my days living in the cave of this mountain as ordained by Yama (74). [73-74]

पूर्वो मृतकदेहो मे भक्षणाय ह्यपस्थितः। धुधान्वितोऽहं तं देहं खादितुं ह्युपचक्रमे।। 75 ।।
तत्क्षणं दैवयोगेन हरिमित्रो महायशाः। विमानेनार्कवर्णेन स्तूयमानोऽप्सरागणैः ।। 76 ।।

pūrvo mṛtakadeho me bhakṣaṇāya hyapasthitaḥ /
dhudhānvito'haṃ taṃ dehaṃ khādituṃ hyupacakrame //
tatkṣaṇaṃ daivayogena harimitro mahāyaśāḥ /
vimānenārkavarṇena stūyamāno'psarāgaṇaiḥ //

My earlier dead body appeared before me so that I can feed upon it. When overcome by hunger I was about to take my first pick at that dead body (75), at that very instant, by some stroke of good fortune, the most glorious and famous Hari Mitra came there aboard a plane that was radiant and illuminated like the splendorous sun. He was surrounded and was being praised by Apsarās (the courtesans of the heaven) (76). [75-76]

विष्णुदूतैः परिवृतः पथा तेनागतौ नृप। विष्णुभक्तो महातेजाः पथि मां दृष्ट्वान्प्रभुः ।। 77 ।।
भुवनेशशरीरन्मद्ददर्शोलूक सन्निधौ। पृष्टोऽहं तेन दयया शवसन्निधिसंस्थितः ।। 78 ।।

viṣṇudūtaiḥ parivṛtaḥ pathā tenāgatau nṛpa /
viṣṇubhakto mahātejāḥ pathi māṃ dṛṣṭvānprabhuḥ //
bhuvaneśaśarīranmaddadarśolūka sannidhau /
pṛṣṭo'haṃ tena dayayā śavasannidhisaṃsthitaḥ //

He was surrounded and attended to by messengers and attendants of Viṣṇu. He came my way. When that most glorious, radiant and great devotee of Viṣṇu saw me on his path (77) standing as an owl in the front of the dead body of king Bhuvaneśa, he asked me with compassion—(78). [77-78]

भुवनेशस्य नृपतेर्देहोऽयं दृश्यते खग। उलूकत्वं च किमिदं खादिन्तु चोद्यते भवान्।। 79 ।।

bhuvaneśasya nṛpaterdeho'yaṃ dṛśyate khaga /
ulūkatvaṃ ca kimidaṃ khādintu codyate bhavān //

'Oh bird! This appears to be the body of the king Bhuvaneśa. And how and why is an owl getting ready to eat it?' (79).

तच्छ्रुत्वा हरिमित्राय प्रणम्य विनयान्वितः। कृताञ्जलिपुटोभूत्वा बहुमानपुरःसरम्।। 80 ।।
तत्सर्वं पूर्ववृत्तान्तं नारदास्मै न्यवेदयम्। पुरापराधं त्वयि यत्तस्य पाकोऽयमागतः ।। 81 ।।

tacchrutvā harimitrāya praṇamya vinayānvitaḥ /
kṛtāñjaliputobhūtvā bahumānapuraḥsaram //
tatsarvaṃ pūrvavṛttāntaṃ nāradāsmai nyavedayam /
purāparādhaṃ tvayi yattasya pāko'yamāgataḥ //

At this, that owl bowed before Hari Mitra and told him the entire episode most respectfully with joined hands (80), 'This is the punishment I am getting for my offences that I have committed against you earlier (81). [80-81]

यावन्मन्वतरं विप्रखादिष्यामि शवं त्विमम्। ततः श्वाह भविष्यामि भविष्यामि ततो नरः।। 82 ।।

yāvanmanvataraṃ viprakhādiṣyāmi śavaṃ tvimam /
tataḥ śvāha bhaviṣyāmi bhaviṣyāmi tato naraḥ //

Oh Brāhmin! I am condemned to eat this corpse for one Manvantara. Then I shall become a dog and finally a human once again' (82).

एतदाकर्ण्य करुणो हरिमित्रमहायशाः। कृपया मां समाचष्ट शृणूलूक महीपते।। 83 ।।
मयि त्वयापराधं यत्तत्सर्वं क्षान्तवानमहम्। शवो ह्यदर्शनं यातु न च श्वा त्वं भविष्यसि।। 84 ।।

etadākarṇya karuṇo harimitramahāyaśāḥ /
kṛpayā māṃ samācaṣṭa śṛṇūlūka mahīpate //
mayi tvayāparādhaṃ yattatsarvaṃ kṣāntavānamaham /
śavo hyadarśanaṃ yātu na ca śvā tvaṃ bhaviṣyasi //

The renowned and most compassionate and merciful Hari Mitra heard this with regret and said to me gracefully and with kindness in his heart, 'Oh king who has unfortunately fallen on bad times and have become an owl. Listen to me (83). I hereby forgive you for all the offences and sins that you have committed against me. Let this corpse vanish from sight and you will also not have to become a dog anymore (84). [83-84]

त्वामाद्य गानयोगश्च प्राप्नोतु मत्प्रसादतः। स्तुहि विष्णुं च गानेन जिह्वा स्पष्टा च जायताम्।। 85 ।।
सुरविद्याधराणां च गन्धर्वाप्सरसां तथा। गानाचार्यो भवेथास्त्वं भक्ष्यभोज्यसमन्वितः।। 86 ।।
ततः कतिपयार्होभिः सर्व भद्रं भविष्यति।। 86½ ।।

tvāmādya gānayogaśca prāpnotu matprasādataḥ /
stuhi viṣṇuṃ ca gānena jihvā spaṣṭā ca jāyatām //
suravidyādharāṇāṃ ca gandharvāpsarasāṃ tathā /
gānācāryo bhavethāstvaṃ bhakṣyabhojyasamanvitaḥ //
tataḥ katipayārhobhiḥ sarva bhadraṃ bhaviṣyati /

By my blessings, you would acquire the skills of singing, and your tongue will be clear and articulate in singing the glories and praises of Lord Viṣṇu (85). You shall be honoured by being acclaimed as a patron teacher of singers. You shall be an expert in the finer intricacies and nuances of music and singing. You shall be a music teacher for the Gods, Vidyādharas (senior semi-Gods) Gandharvas and Apsarās, and you shall have different varieties of food to eat (86). Then after some time, everything will become alright and your sufferings would end' (86½). [85-86½]

हरिमित्रवचस्तच्च विष्णुदूतोपबृंहितम्।। 87।।
सर्वं निरयसंघं मेक्षणादेव व्यनाशयत्। प्रकृत्या विष्णुभक्तानामीदृशी करुणा द्विज।। 88।।

harimitravacastacca viṣṇudūtopabṛṃhitam //
sarvaṃ nirayasaṃghaṃ mekṣaṇādeva vyanāśayat /
prakṛtyā viṣṇubhaktānāmīdṛśī karuṇā dvija //

When Hari Mitra said these words of blessings and reassurance in favour of the owl in the presence of the messengers of Viṣṇu (who were accompanying him as escort and became a witness of this forgiveness and blessing) (87), then all the hell-like environment disappears instantly. Oh Brāhmin (Nārada)! This is the natural merciful, benevolent and compassionate temperament of the devotees of Lord Viṣṇu (88). [87-88]

कृतोपराधलोकानामपि दुखं व्यपोहति। अमृतस्यन्दि वचनमुक्त्वा स प्रययौ हरिम्।। 89।।

kṛtoparādhalokānāmapi dukhaṃ vyapohati /
amṛtasyandi vacanamuktvā sa prayayau harim //

They removed the sorrows and torments of even those who are great offenders. After saying these reassuring, soothing and elixir-like words, he (Hari Mitra) went away to the abode of Hari (Viṣṇu) (89).

सर्वं ते कथितं येन गानाचार्योऽहमुत्तमः। प्राप्स्यामि हरिमेतेन हरिमित्रप्रसादतः।। 90।।

sarvaṃ te kathitaṃ yena gānācāryo'hamuttamaḥ /
prāpsyāmi harimetena harimitraprasādataḥ //

I've told you everything about the way I've attained this exalted stature and honour of being the best expert in the art, craft and skill of melodious music and singing of devotional songs. I shall surely attain Hari (Viṣṇu) by the virtue of the blessings of (the merciful, compassionate, broad-hearted and benevolent devotee of the Lord, named) Hari Mitra (90).

नारदैतदनुवर्णितं मयापूर्वजन्मचरितं महाद्भुतम्।
यः श्रृणोति हरिमेत्य चेतसा स प्रयाति भवनं गदाभृतः।। 91।।

nāradaitadanuvarṇitaṃ mayāpūrvajanmacaritaṃ mahādbhutam /
yaḥ śṛṇoti harimetya cetasā sa prayāti bhavanaṃ gadābhṛtaḥ //

Oh Nārada! I have described to you the most magnificent and strange episode pertaining to my earlier life. Any person who hears it with a devoted mind focused upon Hari is sure to attain/reach the abode of the Lord (i.e. he shall go to heaven and get liberation and deliverance from this mundane world) (91).

Thus ends Canto 6 of the great epic Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa written by sage Vālmīki describing the episode of Nārada cursing Lakṣmī and how he had to go to an owl to learn devotional music.

* * *

Canto 7

Nārada learns the intricate skills of singing from the Owl

This Canto describes the basic rules to follow if one wishes to be an expert singer (verse nos. 5-12). After learning the art and skill of singing from the owl known as Gānabandhu, sage Nārada proceeded to vanquish his arch rival Tamburu whose honouring by Viṣṇu had incited anger, jealously and vengeance in him. At Tamburu's place, he saw a fantastic sight—a huge throng of men and women with disfigured and mutilated bodies; they were the different notes, modes and tunes of classical music personified. When asked by him the cause for their deformities, they informed him that his mismatched, out of tune and out of beat and rhythm singing has resulted in their miserable condition. Thus rebuked at his false pride of being a good singer, good enough to challenge Tamburu, Nārada felt crestfallen. He despondently went to Viṣṇu, full of dejection. The Lord then advised him to roam around singing his glories till the time of Lord Kṛṣṇa's incarnation when Viṣṇu, as Kṛṣṇa, would fulfill all his desires. Meanwhile, Nārada roamed in the world singing the glories of the Lord on the lute. Finally, Lord Kṛṣṇa taught him and then blessed him.

गानबन्धुः पुनः प्राह नारदं मुनिसत्तभम्। एते किन्नरसंघा वै विद्याघ्रात्सरसां गणाः।। 1।।
गानाचर्यामुलूकं मां गानशिक्षार्थमागताः। तपसा नैव शक्त्या वा गानविद्या तपोधन।। 2।।

gānabandhuḥ punaḥ prāha nāradaṃ munisattabham/
ete kinnarasaṃghā vai vidyāghrātsarasāṃ gaṇāḥ//

gānācaryāmulūkaṃ māṃ gānaśikṣārthamāgatāḥ /
tapasā naiva śaktyā vā gānavidyā tapodhana //

Gānabandhu (the owl) again said to Nārada who was a great sage and one of the best amongst them, 'These groups of Kinnaras, Vidyādharas and Apsarās (1) came to me, who am the 'Acārya' (i.e. the most wise, skill, expert and the senior most teacher) of the art and skill of music and singing, for the purpose of learning these intricate arts. Oh a treasury of Tapa (i.e. one who has done a lot of austerity, observed penances and have kept stern religious vows) ! The knowledge of music and the art of singing called 'Gāna Vidyā ' cannot be acquired by doing Tapa (because it requires practical training and practice, besides the involvement of the emotions of the heart and memorising of the verses needed for singing a song) (2). [1-2]

तस्माच्छ्रुमेण युक्तश्च मत्तस्त्वं गानमाप्नुहि। एवमुक्तो मुनिस्तस्मै प्रणिपत्य जगौ यथा।। 3।।
tasmācchrumeṇa yuktaśca mattastvaṃ gānamāpnuhi /
evamukto munistasmai praṇipatya jagau yathā //

Hence, you must learn the skills of music and singing from me with due diligence and sincerity'. When he (Gānabandhu, the musician owl) said so, Nārada reverentially prostrated before him and did as he was told (3).

तच्छृणुष्व मुनिश्रेष्ठ वासुदेवं नमस्य च। उलूकेनैवमुक्तस्तु नारदो मुनिसत्तमः।। 4।।
शिक्षाक्रमेण संयुक्तस्तत्र गानमशिक्षयत्।। 4½।।
tacchṛṇuṣva muniśreṣṭha vāsudevaṃ namasya ca /
ulūkenaivamuktastu nārado munisattamaḥ //
śikṣākrameṇa saṃyuktastatra gānamaśikṣayat /

[Sage Vālmīki said to his disciple sage Bhāradvāja as follows—] 'Oh exalted sage! Nārada, the great sage, bowed before Vāsudeva and followed the instructions (4). He began to systematically learn music and singing (4½). [4-4½]

गानबन्धुस्तमाहेदं त्यक्तलज्जो भवाधुना।। 5।।
स्त्रीसंगमे तथा गीते क्षुतेऽन्वाख्यानसंगमे। व्यवहारे च धान्यानामर्थानां च तथैव च।। 6।।
आयेव्यये तथा नित्यं त्यक्तलज्जस्तु वै भवेत्।। 6½।।
gānabandhustamāhedaṃ tyaktalajjo bhavādhunā //
strīsaṃgame tathā gīte kṣute'nvākhyānasaṃgame /
vyavahāre ca dhānyānāmarthānāṃ ca tathaiva ca //
āyevyaye tathā nityaṃ tyaktalajjastu vai bhavet /

Gānabandhu advised him (Nārada) that he should shed feeling shy and reluctant (5). One should not be shy and feel hesitant or reluctant while having intimate moments with a woman (e.g. a wife), while singing, while sneezing (i.e. one should not suppress a sneeze because he is in the company of others and feels embarrassed), while debating, while dealing with matters pertaining to agricultural produce and finance (6), and in regular commercial matters relating to income and expenditure (6½). [5-6½]

न कुण्ठितेन तथा गूढेन नित्यं प्रावरणादिभिः।। 7।।
हस्तविक्षेपभावेन व्यादितास्येन चैव हि। निर्यातजिह्वायोगेन गेयं च कथञ्चन।। 8।।

na kuṇṭhitena tathā gūḍhena nityaṃ prāvaraṇādibhiḥ //
hastavikṣepabhāvena vyāditāsyena caiva hi /
niryātajihvāyogena geyaṃ ca kathañcana //

One should not sing in a coarse or blunt voice, or in a deep, grunt like, an inaudible, murmuring and conspiratorial voice, or in a place that is small, dense and thickly covered (because the sound will be muffled and suppressed) (7), or with hands spread out and mouth wide open, or with a protruding tongue which is held outside the mouth or dangling from it (8). [7-8]

स्वाङ्ग निरीक्षमाणेन परमप्रेक्षता तथा। न गायेदूर्ध्वबाहुश्च नोर्ध्वदृष्टिः कथञ्चन।। 9।।
हासो भयं क्षुधा कम्पः शोकोऽन्यस्य स्मृतिस्तृषा। नैतानि सप्तरूपाणि गानयोगे महामते।। 10।।

svāṅga nirīkṣamāṇena paramaprekṣatā tathā /
na gāyedūrdhvabāhuśca nordhvadṛṣṭiḥ kathañcana //
hāso bhayaṃ kṣudhā kampaḥ śoko'nyasya smṛtistṛṣā /
naitāni saptarūpāṇi gānayoge mahāmate //

One should not sing while looking attentively at the part of one's own body or at the body of someone who is very near and dear and loving to the singer. One should also not sing with a raised hand or while looking upwards (9). Similarly, singing is to be avoided while shaking with laughter or trembling with fear and hunger, while one is under mental distress and is feeling sorrowful, while one is thinking of someone else or when his mind and attention is focused in the memory of someone who is dear to him, and also while one is thirsty (because all these distract him) (10). [9-10]

नैकहस्तेन शस्येत तालसंघट्टनं मुने। क्षुधार्तेन भयार्तेन तृषार्तेन तथैव च।। 11।।
गानयोगो न कर्तव्यो नान्धकारे कथञ्चन। एवमादीनि योग्यानि कर्तव्यानि महामुने।। 12।।

naikahastena śasyeta tālasaṃghaṭṭanaṃ mune/
kṣudhārtena bhayārtena tṛṣārtena tathaiva ca//
gānayogo na kartavyo nāndhakāre kathañcana/
evamādīni yogyāni kartavyāni mahāmune//

Oh sage! It is not advisable to sing while keeping the beat of the rhythm with only one hand (i.e. both the hands are needed to keep the beat of the rhythm, e.g. clapping of the cymbal). One who is distressed or tormented by hunger, fear and/or thirst is never advised to sing (11). Similarly, one should never sing in the darkness. Oh great sage, this is how a singer should carefully discriminate between the proper and the improper method, circumstance and environment necessary for good singing (12). [11-12]

[Note :—Verse nos. 5-12 prescribes the proper method of singing. A careful reading of these verses shows that any kind of distraction, whether mental or physical, will cause a hindrance in one concentrating on singing. The singing will therefore be affected. Hence, all types of distractions act as an impediment to proper singing, and should be avoided if one is to sing immaculately and in a perfect manner.]

एवमुक्तः स भगवान्नारदो विधिरक्षणे। अशिक्षत्तथा गीतं दिव्यवर्षसहस्रकम्।। 13।।
ततः समस्तसम्पन्नो गीतप्रस्तावकादिषु। विपंच्यादिषु सम्पन्नः सर्वस्वरविभागवित।। 14।।

evamuktaḥ sa bhagavānnārado vidhirakṣaṇe/
aśikṣattathā gītaṃ divyavarṣasahasrakam//
tataḥ samastasampanno gītaprastāvakādiṣu/
vipaṃcyādiṣu sampannaḥ sarvasvaravibhāgavita//

Ụnder his tutelage, advise and guidance, Lord Nārada studied, learnt and practiced the art and skill of singing along with the intricacies and finer nuances of music systemically for a thousand glorious years (13). With this rigorous training, he became well versed with all the aspects of singing, including the initial warm-up phases, besides learning all the notes of the Indian lute (14). [13-14]

अयुतानि च षट्त्रिंशत्सहस्राणि शतानि च। स्वराणां भेदयोगेन ज्ञातवान्मुनिसत्तम।। 15।।
ततो गन्धर्वसंघाश्च किन्नराणां तथा गणाः। मुनिना सह संयुक्ता प्रीतियुक्तास्तु तेऽभवन्।। 16।।

ayutāni ca ṣaṭtriṃśatsahasrāṇi śatāni ca/
svarāṇāṃ bhedayogena jñātavānmunisattama//

tato gandharvasaṃghāśca kinnarāṇāṃ tathā gaṇāḥ /
muninā saha saṃyuktā prītiyuktāstu te'bhavan //

That exalted sage learnt well all the forty six thousand fine shades of the notes, modes and tunes of Indian classical music tradition (15). The throng of celestial musicians and singers, such as Gandharvas and Kinnaras respectively, lived happily with the sage (Nārada) and enjoyed his company (16). [15-16]

गानबन्धुं मुनिः प्राह प्राप्य गानमुत्तमम्। त्वां समासाध सम्पन्नं त्वं हि गीतविशारदः।। 17।।

gānabandhuṃ muniḥ prāha prāpya gānamuttamam /
tvāṃ samāsādha sampannaṃ tvaṃ hi gītaviśāradaḥ //

The sage (Nārada) said to Gānabandhu, his teacher, the owl, 'I have accomplished success in acquiring expertise in all the aspects and nuances of classical music. I bless you that you would be prosperous and famous and most acclaimed in the field of singing and music (17).

गानबन्धुस्ततः प्राह नारदं मुनिपुङ्गवम्।। 18।।
ब्रह्मणो दिवसे ब्रह्मन्मनवः स्युश्चतुर्दश। ततस्त्रैलोक्यसम्प्लावो भविष्यति महामुने।। 19।।
तावन्मे स्याद्यशोभागस्तावन्मे परमं शुभम्। मनसाध्यापितं मे स्याद्दाक्षिण्यान्मुनिसत्तमः।। 20।।

gānabandhustataḥ prāha nāradaṃ munipuṅgavam //
brahmaṇo divase brahmanmanavaḥ syuścaturdaśa /
tatastrailokyasamplāvo bhaviṣyati mahāmune //
tāvanme syādyaśobhāgastāvanme paramaṃ śubham /
manasādhyāpitaṃ me syāddākṣiṇyānmunisattamaḥ //

Then Gānabandhu replied to the most exalted sage, 'Oh Nārada! (18). All the three Lokas (the terrestrial, subterranean and celestial worlds) would be submerged in the great doomsday deluge appearing after the life cycle of fourteen Manus have come to an end in a time span equivalent to one day of Brahmā, the creator (19)—let my auspicious fame and good name last till that time. Oh the exalted sage! Let me be blessed with skill, expertise, wisdom, deftness, cleverness and intelligence automatically, i.e. without my making any special efforts to acquire these virtues; let these qualities become natural to me (20). [18-20]

उलूकं प्राह देवर्षि सर्वं तेऽस्तु मनोगतम्। अतीते कल्पसंयोगे गरुडस्त्वं भविष्यसि।। 21।।
गुणगानाच्युतस्य सायुज्यं तस्य लप्स्यसे। स्वस्ति तेस्तु महाप्राज्ञ गमिष्यामि प्रसीद मे।। 22।।

ulūkaṃ prāha devarṣi sarvaṃ te'stu manogatam /
atīte kalpasaṃyoge garuḍastvaṃ bhaviṣyasi //
guṇagānācyutasya sāyujyaṃ tasya lapsyase /
svasti testu mahāprājña gamiṣyāmi prasīda me //

The celestial sage of the Gods (i.e. Nārada) said to the legendary owl (Gānabandhu, his teacher), 'All your wishes would be fulfilled. After the expiry of one Kalpa, you would be transformed into the legendary Garuḍa (the eagle or heron who is the mount of Lord Viṣṇu) (21). You will attain the privilege of having the rare form of salvation called Sāyujya as a reward of praising the glories of the Lord who is eternal, imperishable, untainted, faultless and steady (called Acyutya) by the medium of your devotional songs. Oh the most wise, erudite and enlightened one ! May you have auspiciousness and all round welfare ! I shall go away from your hermitage now. Be always cheerful and happy' (22). [21-22]

[Note :—The Sāyujya form of salvation is one in which the devotee lives very near his God.]

एवमुक्त्वा ययौ विप्रो जेतुं तुम्बुरुमुत्तमम्। तुम्बुरोश्च गृहाभ्याशे ददर्श विकृताकृतीन्।। 23।।
कृत्ताबाहूरुपादांश्च कृतनासाक्षिवक्षसः। कृतोत्तमांगांगुलींश्च छिन्नभिन्नकलेवरान्।। 24।।
पुंसः स्त्रियश्च विकृतान्ददर्शायुतशो बहून्। नारदेन च ते प्रोक्ताः के यूयं कृतविग्रहाः।। 25।।

evamuktvā yayau vipro jetuṃ tumburumuttamam /
tumburośca gṛhābhyāśe dadarśa vikṛtākṛtīn //
kṛttābāhūrupādāṃśca kṛtanāsākṣivakṣasaḥ /
kṛtottamāṃgāṃgulīṃśca chinnabhinnakalevarān //
puṃsaḥ striyaśca vikṛtāndadarśāyutaśo bahūn /
nāradena ca te proktāḥ ke yūyaṃ kṛtavigrahāḥ //

Saying this, the Brāhmin (Nārada) went to the exalted Tamburu to trounce him (in a music and song competition). When Nārada came to Tamburu's place, he saw a most amazing and stunningly mysterious sight—he saw numerous people, both men and women, with deformed, disfigured, mutilated and dismembered bodies (23). Some had their hands, legs, thighs, noses, breasts and heads cut off, others had their fingers and other parts of the body either severed or deformed and disfigured (24). Dazed, surprised and mystified, Nārada asked them, 'Who has rendered your bodies to such a horrible condition?' (25). [23-25]

नारदं प्रोचुरपि ते त्वया कृताङ्गका वयम्। वयं रागाश्च रागिण्योगानेन भिन्नसन्धिना।। 26।।
भवता गीयते यहिं तर्ह्यवस्येदृशी हि नः। पुनस्तुम्बुरुगानेनच्छिन्नभिन्न प्ररोहणम्।। 27।।

nāradaṃ procurapi te tvayā kṛtāṅgakā vayam/
vayaṃ rāgāśca rāgiṇyogānena bhinnasandhinā//
bhavatā gīyate yahiṃ tarhyavasyedṛśī hi naḥ/
punastumburugānenacchinnabhinna prarohaṇam//

When Nārada asked them, all replied together, 'You are the one who have made our bodies deformed, disfigured, mutilated or dismembered. We are the personifications of the different tunes and modes of music. When you sing out of tune and beat (26), we are symbolically reduced to this horrible state. Again, when the master Tamburu sings, our decrepit bodies are restored back to their former selves (27). [26-27]

तुम्बुरुर्जीवयत्येष त्वं मारयसि नारद। तदाश्चर्य महद्दृष्ट्वा श्रुत्वा च विस्मयान्वितः।। 28।।

tumbururjīvayatyeṣa tvaṃ mārayasi nārada/
tadāścarya mahaddṛṣṭvā śrutvā ca vismayānvitaḥ//

Oh Nārada! You torment us while Tamburu revives us and gives us solace and succour'. Nārada was utterly confounded and perplexed at this great, strange and mysterious happening and the sight which he beheld (28).

धिग्धिगुक्त्वा जगामाथ नारदोऽपि जनार्दनम्। श्वेतद्वीपे स भगवान्नारदं प्राह माधवः।। 29।।
गानबन्धौ च यद्गानं न चैतेनासि पारगः। तुम्बुरोः सदृशो नासि गानेनानेन नारद।। 30।।

dhigdhiguktvā jagāmātha nārado'pi janārdanam/
śvetadvīpe sa bhagavānnāradaṃ prāha mādhavaḥ//
gānabandhau ca yadgānaṃ na caitenāsi pāragaḥ/
tumburoḥ sadṛśo nāsi gānenānena nārada//

Embarrassed, exasperated, disdainful and contrite, Nārada went to Janārdana (literally, the merciful Lord who is king and gracious towards his followers; here meaning Lord Viṣṇu). The Lord was in an island called Śvetadvīpa (literally meaning the white island, or one inhabited by fair skinned people). He said to Nārada (29), 'You have still not become fully enlightened and haven't reached the zenith or pinnacle of singing and music even after learning it from Gānabandhu for such a long time. Oh Nārada! In the skills of music and song, you haven't reached the same high standard and have not achieved the same high stature as obtained by Tamburu (i.e. you are no match for him) (30). [29-30]

मनोर्वैवस्वतस्याहमष्टाविंशतिमे युगे। द्वापरान्ते भविष्यामि यदुवंशकुलोद्भवः।। 31।।
देवक्यां वसुदेवस्य कृष्णो नाम्ना महामुने। तदानीं मां समागम्य स्मारयैतद्यथातथम्।। 32।।

manorvaivasvatasyāhamaṣṭāviṃśatime yuge /
dvāparānte bhaviṣyāmi yaduvaṃśakulodbhavaḥ //
devakyāṃ vasudevasya kṛṣṇo nāmnā mahāmune /
tadānīṃ māṃ samāgamya smārayaitadyathātatham //

In the 28 Yuga (a mythological measurement of time, called a Yuga) of Manu named Vaivasvata Manu, at the end of Dvāpara (the three of the 4-Yuga celestial cycle), I shall manifest myself in the clan of Yadus (cow herds) (31). I shall be born to Devakī and Vāsudeva, and my name shall be Kṛṣṇa. Oh great sage! Come to me at that time and remind me of this topic or episode (32). [31-32]

तत्र त्वां गानसम्पन्नं करिष्यामि महाव्रत। तुम्बुरोश्च समं चैव तथातिशयसंयुतम्।। 33।।
तावत्कालं यथायोगं देवगन्धर्वयोनिषु। शिक्ष त्वं हि यथान्यायमित्युक्त्वान्तरधीयते।। 34।।

tatra tvāṃ gānasampannaṃ kariṣyāmi mahāvrata /
tumburośca samaṃ caiva tathātiśayasaṃyutam //
tāvatkālaṃ yathāyogaṃ devagandharvayoniṣu /
śikṣa tvaṃ hi yathānyāyamityuktvāntaradhīyate //

Oh the one who is very steadfast in keeping vows, a person known as 'Mahāvrata' ! At that time, I shall bless you with the honour of having the best knowledge pertaining to music and song. You would not only become equal to Tamburu but even better than him (33). Up till then, you assume the mantle of a Gandharva (celestial musician) and teach or preach others according to time and circumstance'. Saying this, the Lord disappeared from sight (34). [33-34]

ततो मुनिः प्रणम्यैनं वीणावादनतत्परः। देवर्षिर्देवसंकाशः सर्वाभरणभूषितः।। 35।।
तपसां निधिरत्यर्थं वासुदेवपरायणः। स्कन्धे विपञ्चीमाधाय सर्वलोकाञ्चचार सः।। 36।।

tato muniḥ praṇamyainaṃ vīṇāvādanatatparaḥ /
devarṣirdevasaṃkāśaḥ sarvābharaṇabhūṣitaḥ //
tapasāṃ nidhiratyarthaṃ vāsudevaparāyaṇaḥ /
skandhe vipañcīmādhāya sarvalokāñcacāra saḥ //

The sage bowed before him (Viṣṇu) and began to sing on his lute. Ever since that time, the celestial sage of the Gods (Nārada) became adorned with divine ornaments (befitting his stature as a celestial singer of Gods, or in his new form as a Gandharva) (35). He did Tapa (i.e. kept religious vows, did penances and austerities) to such an extent that he literally became a storehouse or a 'treasury of Tapa'. He was very devoted to Vāsudeva (Viṣṇu). Holding his lute on his shoulders, he wandered in all the worlds, singing the divine glories of the Lord as ordered by him (36). [35-36]

वारुणं याम्यमाग्नेयमैन्द्रं कौबेरमेव च। वायव्यं च तथैशानं संशशं प्राप्य धर्मवित्।। 37।।
गायमाने हरिं सम्यग्वीणावाद विचक्षणः। गन्धर्वाप्सरसां संघैः पूज्यमानस्ततस्ततः।। 38।।

vāruṇaṃ yāmyamāgneyamaindraṃ kauberameva ca /
vāyavyaṃ ca tathaiśānaṃ saṃśaśaṃ prāpya dharmavit //
gāyamāne hariṃ samyagvīṇāvāda vicakṣaṇaḥ /
gandharvāpsarasāṃ saṃghaiḥ pūjyamānastatastataḥ //

Feeling mentally perturbed, that righteous sage roamed around in the abodes of various Gods such as Varuṇa (the God of water), Yama (the God of death and Dharma), Indra (the king of Gods) and Kubera (the treasurer of Gods) located in the different directions of the heaven, such as the northwest and the northeast (37).

He was an expert singer on the Indian lute, and so he sang the glories of Hari (Viṣṇu) during his wanderings. Because of his expertise in the singing of devotional hymns dedicated to Hari, he was welcomed and adored, honoured and worshipped wherever he went by hordes of Gandharvas and Apsarās (celestial musicians and courtesans respectively) (38). [37-38]

ब्रह्मलोकं समासाद्य कस्मिंश्चित्कालपर्यये। हाहा हूहूश्च गन्धर्वो गीतवाद्यविशारदौ।। 39।।
ब्रह्मणो गायकौ दिव्यौ नित्यं गन्धर्वसत्तमौ। तत्र ताभ्यां समासाद्य गायमानो हरि विभुम्।। 40।।

brahmalokaṃ samāsādya kasmiṃścitkālaparyaye /
hāhā hūhūśca gandharvo gītavādyaviśāradau //
brahmaṇo gāyakau divyau nityaṃ gandharvasattamau /
tatra tābhyāṃ samāsādya gāyamāno hari vibhum //

He came to Brahma Loka (the abode of Brahmā, the creator). There he joined a Gandharva named 'Hāhā Hūhū', who was a great expert in singing and playing of musical instrument (39), and he used to sing the praises and divine glories in honour of Hari (Viṣṇu), also known as 'Vibho' which means the supreme, inprishable, almighty, omnipresent, all-pervading and eternal Lord, there (40). [39-40]

ब्रह्मणा च महातेजाः पूजितो मुनिसत्तमः। तं प्रणम्य महात्मानं सर्वलोकपितामहम्।। 41।।
चचार च यथाकामं सर्वलोकेषु नारदः। पुनः कालेन महता गृहं प्राप्य च तुम्बुरोः।। 42।।

brahmaṇā ca mahātejāḥ pūjito munisattamaḥ /
taṃ praṇamya mahātmānaṃ sarvalokapitāmaham //
cacāra ca yathākāmaṃ sarvalokeṣu nāradaḥ /
punaḥ kālena mahatā gṛhaṃ prāpya ca tumburoḥ //

The exalted sage (Nārada) was welcomed and honoured, worshipped and shown great respect by the most radiant and glorious Brahmā, the creator. After sometime, bidding farewell to the great Brahmā, the grand father and patriarch of all the creation and the most exalted soul of it (41), Nārada resumed his wanderings in all the worlds, roaming everywhere voluntarily and as he wished. By and by, after a long period of time, he came to Tamburu's house (42). [41-42]

वीणामादाय तत्रस्थस्तत्रस्थैरप्यलक्षितः। सुरकन्याश्च तत्रस्थाः षडाद्याः सहधैवताः।। 43।।
व्रीडितो भगवान्दृष्ट्वा निर्गतश्च सत्वरम्। शिक्षयामास बहुशस्तत्र तत्र महामुनिः।। 44।।

vīṇāmādāya tatrasthastatrasthairapyalakṣitaḥ /
surakanyāśca tatrasthāḥ ṣaḍādyāḥ sahadhaivatāḥ //
vrīḍito bhagavāndṛṣṭvā nirgataśca satvaram /
śikṣayāmāsa bahuśastatra tatra mahāmuniḥ //

Not seen by others, he came in secretly. Celestial damsels, named Dhaivata and Ṣaḍaja, among others, were present there (43). As soon as he saw them, he felt very ashamed and embarrassed, and immediately went out from the place. Meanwhile, the great sage roamed around here and there, preaching and teaching everywhere (44). [43-44]

[Note :—These verses show that Nārada stealthily came to visit Tamburu, but when he found that his presence has become known to the two celestial Apsarās, he felt very humiliated and embarrassed, for he feared that his secret visit would now become public and he will be subject to scorn and further ridicule. That is why he went away silently without meeting Tamburu.]

कालेऽतीते ततो विष्णुरवतीर्णो जगन्मयः। देवक्या वसुदेवस्य यादवोऽसौ महाद्युतिः।। 45।।
सप्तस्वराङ्गना द्रष्टुं गानविद्याविशारदः। ययौ रैवतके कृष्ण प्रणिपत्य महामुनिः।। 46।।

kāle'tīte tato viṣṇuravatīrṇo jaganmayaḥ /
devakyā vasudevasya yādavo'sau mahādyutiḥ //
saptasvarāṅganā draṣṭuṃ gānavidyāviśāradaḥ /
yayau raivatake kṛṣṇa praṇipatya mahāmuniḥ //

After the passage of a long time, in the household of Vāsudeva of the Yādava race, from the womb of his wife Devakī, the most glorious, radiant and splendours Viṣṇu revealed himself as an incarnation (as Kṛṣṇa) (45). Hearing that Śrī Kṛṣṇa could use all the seven notes of the Indian classical music (while playing on his legendary flute) as well as on observing his body as a perfect image having a perfect resemblance to Viṣṇu, that gentleman who was an expert in the art and skill of singing and music (i.e. Nārada), went to meet Lord Kṛṣṇa on Mt. Raivataka. The great sage prostrated before him (46). [45-46]

व्यज्ञापयदशेषं तच्छ्वेतद्वीपे त्वया पुरा। नारायणेन कथितं गानयोगार्थमुत्तमम्।। 47।।

vyajñāpayadaśeṣaṃ tacchavetadvīpe tvayā purā /
nārāyaṇena kathitaṃ gānayogārthamuttamam //

He (Nārada) reminded him (Kṛṣṇa) of the assurance given by the latter to him earlier as Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu) when they had met on the Śvetadvīpa (see verse nos. 31-32) that he would not only be acquainted with but also blessed and empowered with the best form of music and singing skills (47).

तच्छ्रुत्वा प्रहसन्कृष्णः प्राह जाम्बवती मुदा। एवं मुनिवरं भद्रे शिक्षयस्व यथाविधि।। 48।।
वीणागानसमायोगे तथेत्याह च सा पतिम्। प्रहसन्ती यथायोगं शिक्षयामास तं मुनिम्।। 49।।

tacchrutvā prahasankṛṣṇaḥ prāha jāmbavatī mudā /
evaṃ munivaraṃ bhadre śikṣayasva yathāvidhi //
vīṇāgānasamāyoge tathetyāha ca sā patim /
prahasantī yathāyogaṃ śikṣayāmāsa taṃ munim //

Hearing this reminder, Śrī Kṛṣṇa smiled and said cheerfully to Jāmbavatī (one of his consorts, the daughter of Jāmbavanta, the legendary bear king famous in the story of Rāmāyaṇa), 'Oh lady! Impart the desired knowledge to this sage. Teach him the proper and perfect way to sing devotional songs (48) using the Indian lute.' Accepting these instructions from her husband, she cheerfully began to impart the required knowledge (i.e. the art and skill of singing on the lute) to the sage (49). [48-49]

ततः संवत्सरे पूर्णे नारदं प्राह केशवः। सत्याः समीपमागच्छ शिक्षस्व तथा पुनः।। 50।।

tataḥ saṃvatsare pūrṇe nāradaṃ prāha keśavaḥ /
satyāḥ samīpamāgaccha śikṣasva tathā punaḥ //

When a year had passed by, Keśava (Kṛṣṇa) said to Nārada, 'Now go to Satyā and learn further from her' (50).

[Note :—Satyā is another name for Satyabhāmā, one of the other consorts of Kṛṣṇa.]

तथेत्युक्त्वा सत्यभामां प्रणिपत्य ययौ मुनिः। तथा स शिक्षितो विद्वान्पूर्णे संवत्सरे ततः।। 51।।

tathetyuktvā satyabhāmāṃ praṇipatya yayau muniḥ /
tathā sa śikṣito vidvānpūrṇe saṃvatsare tataḥ //

Saying alright, the sage went to pay his obeisance to Satyabhāmā. She also taught him for a year (51).

वासुदेवनियुक्तोऽसौ रुक्मिण्याः सदनं गतः। अङ्गनाभिस्तत्रत्याभिर्दासीभिर्मुनिसत्तमः।। 52।।

vāsudevaniyukto'sau rukmiṇyāḥ sadanaṃ gataḥ /
aṅganābhistatratyābhirdāsībhirmunisattamaḥ //

Then, on the instructions of Kṛṣṇa, the most exalted sage (Nārada) went to the palace of Rukmiṇī (the chief consort of Kṛṣṇa). Numerous maid servants were present there, serving her (52).

उक्तौऽसौ गायमानोऽपि न स्वरं वेत्सि वै मुने। ततः श्रमेण महता यावत्संवत्सरद्वयम्।। 53।।
शिक्षितोऽसौ तदा देव्या रुक्मिण्याधिजगौ मुनिः। न तु स्वराङ्गनाः प्राप तन्त्रीयोगे महामुनिः।। 54।।

uktau'sau gāyamāno'pi na svaraṃ vetsi vai mune /
tataḥ śrameṇa mahatā yāvatsaṃvatsaradvayam //
śikṣito'sau tadā devyā rukmiṇyādhijagau muniḥ /
na tu svarāṅganāḥ prāpa tantrīyoge mahāmuniḥ //

When she taught music, the sage couldn't gather or understand and learn the different notes, modes and tunes of music having fine shades of differences and variations that she taught. Inspite of his lack of acumen and aptitude in learning music, she persisted with her teaching and made great efforts and continued to teach him for two years, diligently and sincerely (53). By the great efforts made by Rukmiṇī, Nārada at last began to sing better, but he still could not master the art and skill of playing the stringed musical instruments as they ought to be played with perfection (54). [53-54]

आहूय कृष्णो भगवान्स्वयमेव महामुनिम्। अशिक्षयदमेयात्मा गानयोगमनुत्तमम।। 55।।

āhūya kṛṣṇo bhagavānsvayameva mahāmunim /
aśikṣayadameyātmā gānayogamanuttamama //

Then Lord Kṛṣṇa called the great sage and began to teach him personally the best form of devotional music and song (55).

कृष्णदत्तेन गानेन तस्यायाताः स्वराङ्गनाः। ब्रह्मानन्दः समभवन्नारदस्य च चेतसि।। 56।।

kṛṣṇadattena gānena tasyāyātāḥ svarāṅganāḥ /
brahmānandaḥ samabhavannāradasya ca cetasi //

When Kṛṣṇa taught him personally, then all the arts and skills pertaining to the realm of music and song came there in a personified but subtle form and were made available to Nārada (i.e. he was finally able to access, grasp or learn the finer nuances of classical music). At this success, Nārada's mind was ecstatic with joy and he felt exhilarated and fulfilled (56).

ततो द्वेषादयो दोषाः सर्वे अस्तं गता द्विज। ईर्ष्या च तुम्बुरौ यासीन्नारदस्य च सा गता।। 57।।

tato dveṣādayo doṣāḥ sarve astaṃ gatā dvija /
īrṣyā ca tumburau yāsīnnāradasya ca sā gatā //

With this enlightenment (or should be say, the 'blessings' of Lord Kṛṣṇa), all the blights on the character of the sage, such as having hatred, animosity, intolerance and ill-will, subsided or were completely eliminated from his nature. The jealously and malice that he had for Tamburu also disappeared (57).

ततो ननर्त देवर्षि प्रणिपत्य जनार्दनम्। उवाच च हृषीकेशः सर्वज्ञस्त्वं महामुने।। 58।।

tato nanarta devarṣi praṇipatya janārdanam /
uvāca ca hṛṣīkeśaḥ sarvajñastvaṃ mahāmune //

Then the celestial sage of the Gods (Nārada) reverentially prostrated before Janārdana (Kṛṣṇa) and began to dance in ecstasy. Hṛṣīkeśa (Kṛṣṇa) blessed him, saying, 'Oh great sage! You have become omniscient and all knowing now ! (58).

[Note :—The words Janārdana and Hṛṣīkeśa are used for Viṣṇu. Their use here shows that Kṛṣṇa and Viṣṇu are the same Lords.]

प्राचीनगानयोगेन गायस्व मम सन्निधौ। एतत्ते प्रार्थितं प्राप्तं मम लोके तथैव च।। 59।।
नित्यं तुम्बुरुणा सार्द्धं गायस्व य यथातथम्। एवमुक्तो मुनिस्तत्र तथायोगं चचार सः।। 60।।

prācīnagānayogena gāyasva mama sannidhau /
etatte prārthitaṃ prāptaṃ mama loke tathaiva ca //
nityaṃ tumburuṇā sārddhaṃ gāyasva ya yathātatham /
evamukto munistatra tathāyogaṃ cacāra saḥ //

Sing in the ancient skill and art called music and singing in my presence (or, in my company). I have told you the way to reach my abode in the heaven (59). You should sing (devotional songs) regularly in the company of Tamburu also'. On this advise of Kṛṣṇa, the sage roamed everywhere (where Kṛṣṇa stayed and where Tamburu lived), free from all the mental tensions and blights that had been overshadowing him till now (60). [59-60]

[Note :—By saying 'where Kṛṣṇa and Tamburu lives', the narrator of this epic, sage Vālmīki means that Nārada henceforth sang the glories of the Lord wherever there were devotees of the Lord, wherever the Lord was worshipped, such as temples, pilgrim sites and households of great devotees.]

तथा सम्पूजयेत्कृष्णं रुद्रं भुवननायकम्। तदा जगौ हरेस्तत्र नियोगाच्छंकरालये।। 61।।
रुक्मिण्या सत्यया सार्द्धं जाम्बवत्या महामुनिः। कृष्णेन च द्विजश्रेष्ठ श्रुतिजातिविशारदः।। 62।।

tathā sampūjayetkṛṣṇaṃ rudraṃ bhuvananāyakam /
tadā jagau harestatra niyogācchaṃkarālaye //
rukmiṇyā satyayā sārddhaṃ jāmbavatyā mahāmuniḥ /
kṛṣṇena ca dvijaśreṣṭha śrutijātiviśāradaḥ //

Then he (Nārada) duly worshipped Rudra (Lord Śiva) and Śrī Kṛṣṇa who was the Lord of the world. After that, he proceeded to the abode of Hara (Śiva) (61). Oh the most exalted sage (Bhāradvāja)! The great sage (Nārada), who was by now an expert singer and most skilled in the science and craft of music and song, was accompanied by Rukmiṇī, Satyabhāmā, Jāmbavatī and Lord Kṛṣṇa himself[1] (62). [61-62]

[Note :—(i) This story is being narrated to sage Bhāradvāja by sage Vālmīki. So there appears to be a pause here in the narration in verse no. 61. [1](ii) We can also read verse no. 62 as follows— 'The great sage Nārada, who was a most exalted Brāhmin and an expert in the skill of music and singing in his race, was accompanied by Rukmiṇī, Satyabhāmā, Jāmbavatī and Kṛṣṇa while he sang devotional songs'.]

एवं तं मुनिशार्दूल प्रोक्तो गीतक्रमो मया। ब्राह्मणो वासुदेवाख्यं गायमानोऽनिशं द्विज।।63।।
हरेः सायुज्यमाप्नोति सर्वयज्ञफलं लभेत्। अत्यथा नरकं गच्छेद्गायमानोऽन्यदेव हि।।64।।

evaṃ taṃ muniśārdūla prokto gītakramo mayā /
brāhmaṇo vāsudevākhyaṃ gāyamāno'niśaṃ dvija //
hareḥ sāyujyamāpnoti sarvayajñaphalaṃ labhet /
atyathā narakaṃ gacchedgāyamāno'nyadeva hi //

[Sage Vālmīki continued with his narration. He said to Bhāradvāja—] 'Oh the kingly and exalted sage ! I have described to you the importance and significance of devotional singing of the divine glories of the Lord. Oh the senior Brāhmin ! A Brāhmin (i.e. a noble, virtuous, righteous, devout, learned and pious person) who sings the glories and virtues of Vāsudeva night and day (63), attains emancipation and salvation known as Sāyujya, i.e. he becomes one with Lord Hari and attains his abode near him. This achievement is equivalent in its honour and reward as that obtained by doing all the prescribed fire sacrifices and religious rituals. One goes to hell if one sings the glories of anyone else except the supreme Lord (64). [63-64]

कर्मणा मनसा वाचा वासुदेवपरायणः। गायञ्छृण्वंस्तमाप्नोति तस्माच्छ्रेष्ठः प्रियंवदः।।65।।

karmaṇā manasā vācā vāsudevaparāyaṇaḥ /
gāyañchṛṇvaṃstamāpnoti tasmācchreṣṭhaḥ priyaṃvadaḥ //

A person who sings the glories and virtues of Vāsudeva (Viṣṇu) with dedication and devotion employing his actions and deeds, his mind and heart as well as his speech, is able to attain many exalted statures of great honour and respect (as a blessing and reward for such devotional singing). That is the reason why he (Nārada) is dear to all the creatures (whether mortal human beings or immortal Gods) and is considered as the most exalted, senior most, honorable and venerable amongst the sages (65).

[Note :—The two conditions prescribed here are—(i) sincere devotion and dedication (ii) employing deeds and action, mind and heart as well as speech in singing the glories of the Lord. When one is sincerely devoted to the Lord God, naturally then all his activities would be dedicated to the Lord; he would not do anything that would not be liked by his Lord; he will not think of anything which is 'ungodly' or unrighteous and unvirtuous. His heart will be full of compassion and mercy, and he will speak only good and auspicious things because his mind and heart which govern his speech, thoughts, deeds and actions are the seats where the supreme Lord resides. Such a man would be automatically pious and holy, and his holiness will drip from his speech and voice like nectar drops from a flower; his actions will act as a soothing balm for the wounds inflicted upon a creature by this world. Obviously, he will be 'dear and beloved and endeared' to all, and naturally therefore, he will be the 'best of the pack', as it were.]

कथितमिदमपूर्व जानकीजन्मपूर्व श्रुति-सुखमतिगुह्यं स्नेहतस्तेऽतिवाह्यम्।
कलषु कुलविपक्षं भव्यदानैकदक्षं नृभिर विरतवन्द्यं सर्वदेवाभिनन्द्यम्।।66।।

kathitamidamapūrva jānakījanmapūrva
śruti-sukhamatiguhyaṃ snehataste'tivāhyam /
kalaṣu kulavipakṣaṃ bhavyadānaikadakṣaṃ
nṛbhira viratavandyaṃ sarvadevābhinandyam //

I have described to you the background of Sītā's birth which is very fascinating, amazing and mysterious as well as most enchanting and captivating to hear. I have described it to you out of affection for you. It has the potential to destroy all sins, singularly capable of providing welfare and auspiciouness, bestow comfort, happiness and fearlessness to the renunciate who prays and adores this divine and glorious story (relating to Śrī Rāma and Sītā). It also provides happiness and joy to the Gods (66).

Thus ends Canto 7 of the ancient epic Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa written by sage Vālmīki describing how Nārada became an expert singer of devotional songs.

* * *

Canto 8

Rāvaṇa getting boons and his becoming reckless; the birth of Sītā

Rāvaṇa, the great 10-headed demon king, did severe penance to please the creator, Brahmā. When asked for a boon, he first requested eternal life at which the creator expressed his inability to give it to him because everything that has come into existence will end one day (verse no. 8-9). As an alternative, Rāvaṇa demanded that he be granted immunity from being harmed by the Gods and a slew of other semi-Gods, but in his overconfidence he did not seek immunity from earthlings (e.g. men, animals, sages etc.), because he thought that once the Gods were under his command, the earthlings are of no consequence. The most absurd and incredulous boon that he demanded was that he should die when he asks for 'sexual favour from his own daughter'! Armed with these boons, empowered and emboldened with having immunity from punishment by Gods, he went berserk and became ballistic, sledge hammering his way over the heavens, usurping the powers of the Gods, imprisoning them and their womenfolk. He became greedy, pervert, reckless, lustful, promiscuous and lascivious. Meanwhile, one day he went to the forest where great sages and hermits lived; they glowed with a divine and holy halo effusing and radiating form their bodies. Rāvaṇa thought that if he could conquer them, then no one on earth would dare raise his head against him. Since killing them would give him a bad name, so he decided to extract their blood, or make them virtually 'bleed or shed blood under coercion' by piercing their bodies with his arrow. The piercing of them and shedding their blood would be symbolically equivalent to killing them.

He collected their blood in a pitcher. But, as it happened, one of the sages had prayed to Goddess Lakṣmī and wished to have her as his daughter. He sanctified some milk with her Mantras, kept it in a pitcher and went out to the forest to take a bath. Unfortunately for Rāvaṇa, this was the pitcher he used to collect blood from the sages and hermits. He brought the blood and kept it in the safe custody of his wife Mandodarī, warning her that the fluid was 'more dangerous and more poisonous than the sharpest and most vicious of poisons' (verse no. 23). So, when Mandodarī saw her husband's recklessness and sexual perversion, she decided to kill herself by drinking that 'formidable poisonous liquid'. But as destiny would have it, the 'empowered milk' that was kept by the sage in the pitcher was dissolved in the blood put into it by Rāvaṇa, and this milk not only neutralized its harmful effects but turned it into an ambrosia of fertility. Mandodarī thus conceived. Stunned, shocked and awestruck, and fearing reprisals from her husband, she went to Kurukṣetra to abort the embryo and buried it in the ground.

Meanwhile, king Janaka of Janakapura decided to perform a religious sacrifice at the pilgrim site of Kurukṣetra, and incidentally he selected the same field where Mandodarī had buried that embryo.

Janaka was completely oblivious of what lay buried in the ground. When he ploughed the field to prepare it for the rituals, out came Sītā. He took her in as his daughter, and raised her in his household.

यथा सा शोणितोद्भूता राक्षसीगर्भ सम्भवा। यथा भूमितलोत्पन्ना जानकी च यथा हि सा।।1।।

yathā sā śoṇitodbhūtā rākṣasīgarbha sambhavā /
yathā bhūmitalotpannā jānakī ca yathā hi sā //

Sage Vālmīki continued to describe the story of how Sītā was born. He said to Bhāradvāja, 'Listen now to the story how Lakṣmī (the divine consort of Viṣṇu) manifested herself as Sītā from the blood (collected by Rāvaṇa from the sages) and she took birth from the womb of a demoness (Mandodarī) (1).

[Note :—This was due to Nārada's curse as described in Canto 6, verse nos. 15-17.]

सीता तच्छृणु विप्रेन्द्र वर्णयामि तवानघ। दशास्यो रावणो नाम तपस्तप्तुं मनो दधे।।2।।
त्रैलोक्यस्याधिपत्याय अजरामरणाय च। बहुवर्षं तपस्तप्त्वा ज्वलनार्कसमोऽज्वलत्।।3।।

sītā tacchṛṇu viprendra varṇayāmi tavānagha /
daśāsyo rāvaṇo nāma tapastaptuṃ mano dadhe //
trailokyasyādhipatyāya ajarāmaraṇāya ca /
bahuvarṣaṃ tapastaptvā jvalanārkasamo'jvalat //

Oh Viprendra (literally, the king amongst Brāhmins; hear referring to sage Bhāradvāja)! I shall describe the fascinating story to you. The 10-headed Rāvaṇa decided to do severe Tapa (austerity, penance and keeping stern religious vows) (2) so that he could become immortal and free from disease and declining of the body due to old age as well as to obtain unchallenged Lordship over all the three worlds (the celestial, the terrestrial and the nether worlds). He did it for several years, and consequentially, became radiant and glowing with the intensity of a burning fire. [That is, after doing severe Tapa, his body glowed with divine radiance, and he acquired the halo which is reserved for those who do severe Tapa, such as sages and ascetics.] (3) [2-3]

तत्तेजसा जगत्सर्वं दह्यमानं यदाभवत्। तमुवाच तदा ब्रह्मा समागत्य सुरैर्वृतः।।4।।

tattejasā jagatsarvaṃ dahyamānaṃ yadābhavat /
tamuvāca tadā brahmā samāgatya surairvṛtaḥ //

When the whole world began to get scorched due to the intense heat emanating from his glowing body due to the energy and powers acquired by doing severe Tapa, Brahmā, the creator, came to him along with other Gods and said—(4).

पौलस्त्य विरमाद्य त्वं तपसो मम वाक्यतः। तपसोग्रेण महता लोका भस्मीकृता इव।।5।।
वरं ददामि ते वत्स यत्ते मनसि वर्तते। तपोधनं लभस्वाद्य वरदान्मत्त ईप्सितम्।।6।।

paulastya viramādya tvaṃ tapaso mama vākyataḥ/
tapasogreṇa mahatā lokā bhasmīkṛtā iva//
varaṃ dadāmi te vatsa yatte manasi vartate/
tapodhanaṃ labhasvādya varadānmatta īpsitam//

'Oh Paulastya (i.e. Rāvaṇa)! You should wind up your Tapa on my advice. All the worlds are about to get reduced to ashes due to the intense heat generated by your severe Tapa (5). Oh son! Whatever you desire in your heart, I shall give it to you. Oh Tapodhana (literally, a treasury of Tapa, or one who has done great Tapa)! You shall get whatever you desire from me' (6). [5-6]

[Note :—Rāvaṇa was the son of Pulastya. That is why he is also known as Paulastya.]

न्यवारयत चक्षूंषि सूर्यबिम्बावलोकनात्। प्रणिपत्यजगन्नाथं वरं वव्रे स रावणः।।7।।

nyavārayata cakṣūṃṣi sūryabimbāvalokanāt/
praṇipatyajagannāthaṃ varaṃ vavre sa rāvaṇaḥ//

Now you must close your eyes which appear to radiate the heat and dazzle as if they were an image of the splendorous sun in the sky; or your eyes seem to reflect the concentrated rays of the sun on to the world'. Then Rāvaṇa prostrated before the Lord of the world (Brahmā) and asked for boons (7).

देहि सर्वामरत्वं मे वरदोऽसि यदि प्रभुः। तदाकर्ण्य वचो ब्रह्मा पुनः प्राह स रावणम्।।8।।

dehi sarvāmaratvaṃ me varado'si yadi prabhuḥ/
tadākarṇya vaco brahmā punaḥ prāha sa rāvaṇam//

'Oh Lord! If you indeed wish to bless me with a boon, then give me eternal immortality (or perpetual life which does not decay or end)'. Hearing it, Brahmā said to Rāvaṇa once again—(8).

नहि सर्वामरत्व ते वरमन्यं वृणीष्व मे। ततः स रावणः प्राह कूटी वादी हि राक्षसः।।9।।

nahi sarvāmaratva te varamanyaṃ vṛṇīṣva me/
tataḥ sa rāvaṇaḥ prāha kūṭī vādī hi rākṣasaḥ//

'No one can become completely immortal and truthfully eternal. Ask for some other blessing or boon'. Then that clever, cunning and shrewd demon Rāvaṇa quipped— (9).

[Note :—Brahmā refused to give this boon to Rāvaṇa because Brahmā himself will come to an end one day when his life span ends. No one in this creation is truthfully eternal, except Brahma. Therefore, Brahmā did not have the right to give something to Rāvaṇa which he himself did not possess.]

न सुरः नासुरण यक्षाः पिशाचोरगराक्षसाः। विद्याधराः किन्नरा वा तथैवाप्सरसां गणाः।।10।।
न हन्युर्मां कथं चित्त देहि मे वरमुत्तमम्। अन्यच्च ते वृणे ब्रह्मस्तच्छृणुष्व पितामह।।11।।
आत्मनो दुहिता मोहदात्यर्थं प्रार्थिता भवेत्। तदा मृत्युर्मम भवेद्यदि कन्या न कांक्षति।।12।।

na suraḥ nāsuraṇa yakṣāḥ piśācoragarākṣasāḥ /
vidyādharāḥ kinnarā vā tathaivāpsarasāṃ gaṇāḥ //
na hanyurmāṃ kathaṃ citta dehi me varamuttamam /
anyacca te vṛṇe brahmastacchṛṇuṣva pitāmaha //
ātmano duhitā mohadātyarthaṃ prārthitā bhavet /
tadā mṛtyurmama bhavedyadi kanyā na kāṃkṣati //

'Gods, non-Gods, Yakṣas (a semi-God who guards the treasure of Kubera, the treasurer of Gods; he is an employee of Kubera), phantoms and ogres, spirits, demons, Vidyādharas (a semi-God who is wiser than other semi-Gods), Kinnaras (celestial male dancers) or the guards who protect celestial Apsarās (the courtesans of Indra's court; they are celestial damsels) (10)—bless me with this excellent boon that none of them can ever kill or harm me. Oh grandfather Brahmā ! Listen to the other boon that I ask for (11). When, under the influence of delusion and ignorance as well as passion and lust (collectively called Moha), I request my own daughter and she turns down my request, it should be then that I would die' (12). [10-12]

तथेत्युक्त्वा जगामाशु ब्रह्मा लोकपितामहः। नरान्नाजीगणद्रक्षा मत्वा तान्स्तृणवद्द्विज।।13।।

tathetyuktvā jagāmāśu brahmā lokapitāmahaḥ /
narānnājīgaṇadrakṣā matvā tānstṛṇavaddvija //

Saying, 'Well, alright, so be it', the grandfather patriarch of the world, Brahmā went away from there. Oh Brāhmin (Bhāradvāja). Rāvaṇa was so overconfident of himself and regarded humans as mere twigs of no consequence that he treated them with utter disdain and contempt and he did not bother to ask for immunity from getting killed by humans (13).

ब्रह्मदत्तवरो राजा रावणोवरदर्पितः। त्रैलोक्यजयसर्वस्वं प्राप्तवान्बाहुवीर्यतः।।14।।

brahmadattavaro rājā rāvaṇovaradarpitaḥ /
trailokyajayasarvasvaṃ prāptavānbāhuvīryataḥ //

Emboldened by Brahmā's boon (that no one can kill him now), king Rāvaṇa became belligerent, ballistic, merciless, pervert, unrelenting and reckless. He impassively went berserk and aggressively conquered the entire Trilokī (consisting of the three worlds— the nether, the terrestrial and the heavens) with impunity (14).

एकदा रावणो राजा दण्डकारण्यमागतः। तदर्षीनग्निकल्पांश्च दृष्ट्वा मनस्यचिन्तयत्।।15।।
एतान जित्वा हि कथं त्रिलोकीजयभागहम्। एषां वधेन च श्रेयो न पश्यामि महात्मानाम्।।16।।

ekadā rāvaṇo rājā daṇḍakāraṇyamāgataḥ /
tadarṣīnagnikalpāṃśca dṛṣṭvā manasyacintayat //
etāna jitvā hi kathaṃ trilokījayabhāgaham /
eṣāṃ vadhena ca śreyo na paśyāmi mahātmānām //

Once, king Rāvaṇa came to a forest known as Daṇḍakāraṇya. When he saw the great sages there who effused a divine radiance which resembled the brilliant light and splendour emanating from a burning fire, he thought to himself (15), 'How can I be truthfully called a conqueror and vanquisher of Trilokī without vanquishing and subduing these people? At the same time, I do not see any merit or benefit or credit in killing these great souls (who have not harmed me)' (16). [15-16]

दुरात्मा स विचिन्त्यैतत्प्राह तान्मुनिपुङ्गवान्। अहं सर्वस्य जगतः शास्ता च जयभागहम्।।17।।
भवतां जयमाकांक्षे जयं दत्त द्विजर्षभाः। इत्युक्त्वा स शराग्रेण क्षताच्छ्रोणितमङ्गतः।।18।।
बलादाकृष्य तेषां वै कलशेस्थापयत्प्रभुः।। 18½।।

durātmā sa vicintyaitatprāha tānmunipuṅgavān /
ahaṃ sarvasya jagataḥ śāstā ca jayabhāgaham //
bhavatāṃ jayamākāṃkṣe jayaṃ datta dvijarṣabhāḥ /
ityuktvā sa śarāgreṇa kṣatācchoṇitamaṅgataḥ //
balādākṛṣya teṣāṃ vai kalaśesthāpayatprabhuḥ /

Thinking thus, that wicked and pervert fellow said to those exalted sages, 'I have the honour of conquering the entire world (17). Oh exalted Brāhmins ! I now desire to subdue and conquer you. Give me this privilege'. Saying this, he forcefully pierced their bodies with the tip of his arrow and collected their blood in a pitcher (18½). [17-18½]

तत्र गृत्समदो नाम शतपुत्रपिता द्विजः ।।19।।
दुहित्रर्थे भार्यया स प्रार्थितो भगवान्मुनिः। लक्ष्मीर्मे दुहिता भूयादित्यसौ कलशे विभुः ।।20।।
दुग्धं चाहरहस्तत्र कुशाग्रेण समन्त्रतः। स्थपयत्येष नियतस्तदहर्निर्ययौ वनम्।।21।।

tatra gṛtsamado nāma śataputrapitā dvijaḥ //
duhitrarthe bhāryayā sa prārthito bhagavānmuniḥ /
lakṣmīrme duhitā bhūyādityasau kalaśe vibhuḥ //
dugdhaṃ cāharahastatra kuśāgreṇa samantrataḥ /
sthapayatyeṣa niyatastadaharniryayau vanam //

Among those sages was a Brāhmin named Gṛtsamada who was the father of a hundred sons (19). That Brāhmin, along with his wife, had wished to have a daughter, and therefore requested the Lord for a girl child. He had asked that Lakṣmī should become their child (20). With this prayer, he had sanctified a little milk with the tip of Kuśa grass (a special blade of dark green grass or reed used to invoke divine Mantras and Gods to sanctify anything; the grass is called *Agrostis-linearis*) and kept it in a pitcher before going out to the forest (21). [19-21]

तद्दिने दैवयोगेन कलशे तत्र रावणः। मुनीनां शोणितं स्थाप्य गृहीत्वा स्वगृहं ययौ।।22।।

taddine daivayogena kalaśe tatra rāvaṇaḥ /
munīnāṃ śoṇitaṃ sthāpya gṛhītvā svagṛhaṃ yayau //

As destiny would have it, or as it was predetermined by the Gods, that day Rāvaṇa used that pitcher to collect the blood that he had extracted forcibly from the sages, and then he went home with that pitcher full of the blood of the sages (22).

भार्या मन्दोदरीं प्राह कलशं रक्ष सुन्दरि। विषादप्यधिकं विद्धि शोणितं कलशे स्थितम्।।23।।
न देयं नापि वा भक्ष्यं मुनीनां शोणितं त्विदम्।। 23½ ।।

bhāryā mandodarīṃ prāha kalaśaṃ rakṣa sundari /
viṣādapyadhikaṃ viddhi śoṇitaṃ kalaśe sthitam //
na deyaṃ nāpi vā bhakṣyaṃ munīnāṃ śoṇitaṃ tvidam /

He said to his wife Mandodarī, 'Oh the beautiful one! Take care of this pitcher. The blood that is stored in it is more potent, more powerful, more sharp and scorching, more corroding and caustic than the most powerful poison in existence (23). This blood belonging to the sages should neither be given to anyone nor should it be imbibed or injected in any way' (23½). [23-23½]

त्रैलोक्यजयलाभेन रावणो लोकरावणः ।।24।।
देवदानवयक्षाणां गन्धर्वाणां च कन्यकाः। आहृत्य रमयामास मन्दरे सह्यपर्वते।।25।।
हिमवन्मेरुविन्ध्याद्रौ रमणीयवने तथा।। 25½।।

trailokyajayalābhena rāvaṇo lokarāvaṇaḥ //
devadānavayakṣāṇāṃ gandharvāṇāṃ ca kanyakāḥ /
āhṛtya ramayāmāsa mandare sahyaparvate //
himavanmeruvindhyādrau ramaṇīyavane tathā /

As the spoils of conquest of the entire Trilokī (see verse no. 16), Rāvaṇa, who made the whole world weep and wail under his tyranny (24), captured and abducted the womenfolk and virgins of the Gods, other demons (called Dānavas), Yakṣas and Gandharvas. He indulged in satisfying his carnal desires, lust and promiscuity by incarcerating them (or holding them in captivity) on the mountains called Mandāra and Sahya (25). He also roamed about and frolicked with them in the enchanting and pleasing environs of the forest of the Himālayas, Mt. Meru and Mt. Vindhyācala (25½). [24-25½]

मन्दोदरी तथा दृष्ट्वा पति सा हि मनस्विनी ।।26।।
आत्मानं गर्हयामास भर्तुः स्नेहमपश्यती। धिग्जीवितं हि नारीणां यौवनं कुलमेव च।।27।।
वञ्चिताः पतिना याः स्युस्तस्मान्मे मरणं वरम्।। 27½।।

mandodarī tathā dṛṣṭvā pati sā hi manasvinī //
ātmānaṃ garhayāmāsa bhartuḥ snehamapaśyatī /
dhigjīvitaṃ hi nārīṇāṃ yauvanaṃ kulameva ca //
vañcitāḥ patinā yāḥ syustasmānme maraṇaṃ varam /

A thoughtful Mandodarī became melancholic and remorseful. She was aghast at her husband's promiscuity and recklessness (26). When she observed her husband's lascivious and pervert nature, seeing that her husband is enamoured of other women and showers his love and affection on them instead of his own wife, she cursed and spited at herself that it is shameful and abominable for a woman of her age and clan and reputation to bear with such ignominy, humiliation, embarrassment and insult (27) that she is deprived of the attention and affection of her husband who is showing it to other women. It is better for her to die and end her life than to cope with this abhorable and contemptible existence, she thought to herself (27½). [26-27½]

पुरा रावणसन्दिष्टं शोणितं क्ष्वेडतोऽधिकम्।।28।।
पपौ मरणमांकांक्ष्य पतिना वञ्चिता सती। लक्ष्मीशरणदुग्धेन मिश्रिताच्छोणितादभुत्।।29।।

purā rāvaṇasandiṣṭaṃ śoṇitaṃ kṣveḍato'dhikam //
papau maraṇamāṃkāṃkṣya patinā vañcitā satī /
lakṣmīśaraṇadugdhena miśritācchoṇitādbhut //

Rāvaṇa had said earlier that this blood (collected from the sages) is more dangerous and killing than the strongest of poison (28). That loyal and chaste woman (Mandodarī), who was betrayed and abandoned by her husband (Rāvaṇa) and who felt distraught and dejected at being neglected and rejected by her own husband, drank that blood in order to kill herself (i.e. commit suicide). That blood had the sanctified and wonderfully empowered milk which was specially invoked with divine Mantras through which Lakṣmī was to take birth on this earth. (See verse nos. 15-17 and 23-24½ of Canto no. 6) (29). [28-29]

सद्यो रावणाकान्ताया गर्भो ज्वलनसन्निभः। ततो विस्मयमापन्ना सा हि मन्दोदरी शुभाः।।30।।

sadyo rāvaṇākāntāyā garbho jvalanasannibhaḥ /
tato vismayamāpannā sā hi mandodarī śubhāḥ //

As soon as she drank that blood, a glorious and splendours conception resembling the radiance of fire took place in her womb. Observing this strange and mysterious phenomenon, Mandodarī, the chaste woman, was utterly astonished and dumbfounded (30).

पीतं विषाधिकं रक्तं गर्भस्तेनाभवन्मम्। इति सञ्चिन्तयामास भर्ता विप्रेषितौ मम।।31।।
कामिनीभिः क्रीडतं स कामी भर्ता हि रावणः। सम्वत्सरमिमं भर्त्रा सह मे वसतिर्नहि।।32।।

pītaṃ viṣādhikaṃ raktaṃ garbhastenābhavanmam /
iti sañcintayāmāsa bhartā vipreṣitau mama //
kāminībhiḥ krīḍataṃ sa kāmī bhartā hi rāvaṇaḥ /
saṃvatsaramimaṃ bhartrā saha me vasatirnahi //

She wondered, 'I had drunk blood that was more powerful than the strongest of poisons in order to commit suicide. I wonder how

I've conceived. My husband is not near me at the present time'. She was confounded and perplexed at this strange and most unexpected development, and became very worried and regretful (31).

'My husband is passionately playing around with beautiful and sexually aroused women. For the last one year, I have had no physical relationship with him (32). [31-32]

किं वक्तव्यं मया साध्व्या गर्भिण्या भर्तृ संसदि। चिन्तया दग्धगात्रीव तीर्थसेवन छद्मना।।33।।
विमानवरमारुह्य कुरुक्षेत्रं जगाम सा। तत्र गर्भ विनिष्कृष्य निचखान भुवस्तले।।34।।

kiṃ vaktavyaṃ mayā sādhvyā garbhiṇyā bhartṛ saṃsadi /
cintayā dagdhagātrīva tīrthasevana chadmanā //
vimānavaramāruhya kurukṣetraṃ jagāma sā /
tatra garbha viniṣkṛṣya nicakhāna bhuvastale //

What will I say; how will I justify my pregnancy to my husband who regards me as chaste, loyal, honourable, immaculate and pure ?' Fearful of the horrible scandal, ignominy and numerous other unwanted consequences attendant to this development, she thought of an escape route. She pretended that she should go on a pilgrimage in disguise (33) and boarded a plane to go to Kurukṣetra. There she aborted the embryo and buried it in the ground (34). [33-34]

स्नात्वा सरस्वतीतोये पुरायात्स्वमालयम्। च चोदितं तत्कस्मैजिद्रहः कार्य सुगोपितम्।।35।।

snātvā sarasvatītoye purāyātsvamālayam /
ca coditaṃ tatkasmaijidrahaḥ kārya sugopitam //

She bathed in the river Sarasvatī and went back home. This action she kept absolutely secret with her (35).

कालेन कियता ब्रह्मञ्जनकर्षिर्महामनाः। कुरुक्षेत्रं समसाद्य जाङ्गले यज्ञमावहन्।।36।।

kālena kiyatā brahmañjanakarṣirmahāmanāḥ /
kurukṣetraṃ samasādya jāṅgale yajñamāvahan //

[Sage Vālmīki said to Bhāradvāja—] 'Oh Brāhmin! After sometime, the great and wise king Janaka came to the forests of Kurukṣetra and did a fire sacrifice there (36).

स्वर्णलाङ्गलमादाय यज्ञभूमि चखान सः। स्वर्णलाङ्गलसीतान्तः कन्यैका प्रोत्थिताभवत्।।37।।
पुष्पवृष्ठिश्च महती पपात कन्यकोपरि। तद्दृष्ट्वा महदाश्चर्य राजा विस्मयमागतः।।38।।

svarṇalāṅgalamādāya yajñabhūmi cakhāna saḥ /
svarṇalāṅgalasītāntaḥ kanyaikā protthitābhavat //

puṣpavṛṣṭhiśca mahatī papāta kanyakopari /
taddṛṣṭvā mahadāścarya rājā vismayamāgataḥ //

He took a golden plough and ploughed the ground where the fire sacrifice was to be performed (as a ritual to prepare it for the sacrifice) (37). From the ground that was scooped up by the golden ploughshare, an infant girl child emerged. There was a tremendous hail of flowers from the heavens on that girl child. Observing this most strange, miraculous and fascinating sight, the king was amazed and wonderstruck (38). [37-38]

कर्तव्ये मूढतामाप ततः खेऽभूत्सरस्वती। राजन्गृहाण कन्यां त्वं पालयैनां महाप्रभाम्।।39।।
ज्वलनार्कसमां दिव्यां महत्कार्यं तवालये। भविष्यति महाभाग क्षेमं च जगतोऽनया।।40।।

kartavye mūḍhatāmāpa tataḥ khe'bhūtsarasvatī /
rājangṛhāṇa kanyāṃ tvaṃ pālayaināṃ mahāprabhām //
jvalanārkasamāṃ divyāṃ mahatkāryaṃ tavālaye /
bhaviṣyati mahābhāga kṣemaṃ ca jagato'nayā //

He was stunned and dumbfounded into stupor, not knowing what to do. At that moment, there was an invisible voice from the sky that addressed the king. It said, 'Oh King! Accept this most glorious girl child who is radiant and splendorous like the electric, and bring her up (i.e. take care of her like she were your own daughter) (39). This daughter, who is divine and glorious like a fire, will be very fortunate for your household. Something great will be done by her presence in your place. Oh the most fortunate king ! She will play a key role in doing something which would be good for the whole world (or, she will be instrumental in ensuring welfare for the entire world) (40). [39-40]

यज्ञः सम्पाद्यतां राजन्नायं विघ्नस्तवानघ। नामास्याः किल सीतेति सीताया उत्थिता यतः।।41।।
कल्पयैना दुहितरमित्युक्त्वावाक् तिरोहिता। 41½।

yajñaḥ sampādyatāṃ rājannāyaṃ vighnastavānagha /
nāmāsyāḥ kila sīteti sītāyā utthitā yataḥ //
kalpayainā duhitaramityuktvāvāk tirohitā /

Oh king! This happening is not some kind of bad omen as you are afraid of. Go ahead and complete your sacrifice. Since she has emerged from a furrow made by a ploughshare, she will be known as 'Sītā' (41). Regard her as your own daughter.' After this, the impersonal, invisible voice went silent (41½). [41-41½]

तच्छ्रुत्वा प्रीतिमान्राजा यज्ञं कृत्वा महाधनम्।।42।।
जगाम सीतामादाय महर्षिभ्यश्च तां ददौ।।42½।।
tacchrutvā prītimānrājā yajñaṃ kṛtvā mahādhanam //
jagāma sītāmādāya maharṣibhyaśca tāṃ dadau /

Hearing this divine instruction from the heavens, the king was exhilarated. He cheerfully completed the rituals involving huge expenditure (42), and after its successful completion, he brought Sītā and handed her over reverentially to the great sages and seers for their blessings (42½). [42-42½]

एतत्ते कथितं विप्र सीताजन्मैककारणम्। श्रुत्वैतत्सर्वपापेभ्यो मुक्तो भवति मानवः।।43।।
etatte kathitaṃ vipra sītājanmaikakāraṇam /
śrutvaitatsarvapāpebhyo mukto bhavati mānavaḥ //

[Vālmīki said to Bhāradvāja—] 'Oh Brāhmin! I've told you the story of how Sītā was born. A person can become absolved of all sins and misdeeds that he has done if he hears this episode with reverence and devotion (43).

जनकदुहितृजन्म श्रावयित्वा तु श्रुत्वा न पुनरिह जन्म प्राप्नुयात्पुण्यवांश्च।
दशरथसुतकान्ता तस्य गेहं कदाचिद्विसृजति नहि सर्वैः पातकैर्मुच्यते च।।44।।
janakaduhitṛjanma śrāvayitvā tu śrutvā
na punariha janma prāpnuyātpuṇyavāṃśca /
daśarathasutakāntā tasya gehaṃ kadācid-
visṛjati nahi sarvaiḥ pātakairmucyate ca //

By telling this story about the birth of the daughter of Janaka as well as by hearing about it, one does not have to take birth in this world again. Such a person is blessed with virtues and goodnesses. The divine consort of the son of Daśaratha (i.e. Lakṣmī as Sītā who was married to Śrī Rāma, who was Viṣṇu manifested as the son of Daśaratha) never abandons his household. [That is, Śrī Rāma and Sītā always live in the house of a person who hears their divine story called Rāmāyaṇa with due honour and respect.] Besides this, such a person is liberated from the ill effect of all sins and misdeeds done by him (44)'.

Thus ends Canto 8 of the ancient epic Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa written by Vālmīki describing the birth of Sītā.

* * *

Canto 9

Sage Paraśurāma sees the divine, macrocosmic, Virāṭ form of Śrī Rāma as Viṣṇu

After having married Sītā, Śrī Rāma's marriage party on was on its way back to Ayodhyā when an angry sage Paraśurāma came for a face off because he had heard about Śrī Rāma breaking Lord Śiva's bow, called Pināka, because the breaking or stringing of which was a preset condition for anyone marrying Sītā. He also wished to see Śrī Rāma and verify his credentials as an incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu. Peeved at the sage's impertinence and arrogance, Śrī Rāma snatched his bow and arrow, mounted it and shot the arrow at him. Almost simultaneously, Śrī Rāma revealed his true divine form of the macrocosmic, vast and colossus all-encompassing form as Lord Viṣṇu, also known as Virāṭ Puruṣa, in whose body the whole creation was visible to the sage. Meanwhile, the arrow sapped the energy and divine powers possessed by the sage, leaving him limp like a withered plant. Terrified, dazed, numbed and crestfallen beyond measure, the sage fainted. Upon recovery, Śrī Rāma advised him to go to do Tapa (austerity, penance and keeping stern religious vows) all over again. At the end of one year of severe penances, the spirits of the sage's dead ancestors, called Pitaras, advised him to go and bathe in the holy site of a river called Vadhūsara to regain his lost glory, which Paraśurāma did. As a result, he got back his powers and potentials. Meanwhile, Śrī Rāma's entourage came back to Ayodhyā.

रामः सीतापरिणयं कृत्वा दशरथादिभिः। भ्रातृभिश्चापि सहितो भार्यया सह सीतया।।1।।
अयोध्यां गन्तुमारेभे नानावाद्यपुरःसरम्।। 1½।।

rāmaḥ sītāpariṇayaṃ kṛtvā daśarathādibhiḥ /
bhrātṛbhiścāpi sahito bhāryayayā saha sītayā //
ayodhyāṃ gantumārebhe nānāvādyapuraḥsaram /

After marrying Sītā in the presence of king Daśaratha (his father) and others, Śrī Rāma started making preparations to return back to Ayodhyā along with his brothers and his newly wed wife Sītā (1-1½).

आर्चीकनन्दनो रामो भार्गवो रेणुकासुतः।।2।।
तस्य दाशरथेः श्रुत्वा रामस्याक्लिष्टकर्मणः। विवाहकौतुकं वीरः पथा तेन समागतम्।।3।।

ārcīkanandano rāmo bhārgavo reṇukāsutaḥ //
tasya dāśaratheḥ śrutvā rāmasyākliṣṭakarmaṇaḥ /
vivāhakautukaṃ vīraḥ pathā tena samāgatam //

Sage Paraśurāma, who was born in the clan/family of sages Bhṛgu and Ṛcīka and whose mother was called Reṇukā (2), heard about the marvelous, amazing, most difficult and stupendous deeds done by Śrī Rāma, the son of Daśaratha. Amazed and mystified at those deeds done by Śrī Rāma leading to his marriage (with Sītā), Paraśurāma became eager to see and meet him in person. So he came and met Śrī Rāma while he was on the way back to Ayodhyā after marriage (3). [2-3]

[Note :—The great and marvelously amazing deeds done by Śrī Rāma leading to his marriage with Sītā was the lifting and breaking of the stern bow, called Pināka, belonging to Lord Śiva. Sītā's father Janaka had made a vow that anyone who could string that bow would betrothal Sītā. All great kings on the earth had assembled to try their luck, but failed. Śrī Rāma had raised and, trying to string the sturdy but old bow, had broken it as if it was a sport. Though not expressly mentioned in the text, this news angered Paraśurāma because he took it as an affront and an assiduous insult of Lord Śiva, his patron God. He came to take revenge and punish Śrī Rāma for his temerity, but at the same time he was curious to see that person who could do such an impossible task.]

धनुरादाय तद्दिव्यं क्षत्रियाणां निबर्हणम्। जिज्ञास्यमानो रामस्य वीर्य दाशरथेस्तथा।।4।।
dhanurādāya taddivyaṃ kṣatriyāṇāṃ nibarhaṇam /
jijñāsyamāno rāmasya vīrya dāśarathestathā //

He (Paraśurāma) was a vanquisher of the Kṣatriyas (the warrior class). He took a magnificent and divine bow in his hand and came to meet Śrī Rāma, the son of Daśaratha, to judge and measure his valour, strength and potentials (4).

स तमभ्यागतं दृष्ट्वा उद्यतास्त्रमवस्थितम्। प्रहसन्निव विप्रेन्द्रं रामो वचनमब्रवीत्।।5।।
स्वागतं ते मुनिश्रेष्ठ किं कार्यं कारवाणि ते।।5½।।
sa tamabhyāgataṃ dṛṣṭvā udyatāstramavasthitam /
prahasanniva viprendraṃ rāmo vacanamabravīt //
svāgataṃ te muniśreṣṭha kiṃ kāryaṃ kāravāṇi te /

Seeing the sage standing in front with weapons at the ready in a confrontationist attitude, Śrī Rāma smiled and said to that Viprendra (literally meaning one who is like a king amongst Brāhmins) (5), 'Oh exalted sage! I welcome you; what can I do for you?' (5½). [5-5½]

प्रोवाच भार्गवो वाक्यं स्वागतेन किमस्ति मे।।6।।
क्षत्रकालं हि राजेन्द्र धनुरेतन्ममास्ति हि। समारोपय यत्नेन यदि शक्तोसि राघव।।7।।

provāca bhārgavo vākyaṃ svāgatena kimasti me//
kṣatrakālaṃ hi rājendra dhanuretanmamāsti hi/
samāropaya yatnena yadi śaktosi rāghava//

At this, Bhārgava (i.e. Paraśurāma) snubbed him, saying sternly, scornfully and tauntingly, 'What I have got to do with formal welcomes? (6). Oh Rajendra (literally meaning an emperor, or a King of kings)! I hold in my hands the bow which symbolises death for the entire Kṣatriya race. If you have the potential, requisite strength and guts, then string it' (7). [6-7]

इत्युक्तस्त्वाह भगवन्स्त्वं नाधिक्षेप्तुमर्हसि। नहि नह्यधमो धर्मः क्षत्रियाणां द्विजातिषु।।8।।
इक्ष्वाकूणां विशेषेण बाहुवीर्येण कत्थनम्। 8½।

ityuktastvāha bhagavanstvaṃ nādhikṣeptumarhasi/
nahi nahyadhamo dharmaḥ kṣatriyāṇāṃ dvijātiṣu//
ikṣvākūṇāṃ viśeṣeṇa bāhuvīryeṇa katthanam/

When Paraśurāma said these challenging and arrogant words, Śrī Rāma quipped, 'Oh Lord! You must not make such wild allegations. Among all the upper classes (i.e. Brāhmins, the priestly class, Kṣatriyas, the warrior class and Vaiśyas, the trading class), I have not fallen from my righteous path of following the tenets and rules of conduct prescribed for the Kṣatriyas (8). Especially the Kṣatriyas born in the clan/family of king Ikṣvāku do not haughtily display and brag about their strength, powers, potentials and valour in public (8½)'. [8-8½]

तमेवं वादिनं तत्र रामो वचनब्रवीत।।9।।
बलं वागुपदेशेन धनुरायच्छ राघव।। 9½।।

tamevaṃ vādinaṃ tatra rāmo vacanabravīta//
balaṃ vāgupadeśena dhanurāyaccha rāghava/

When Śrī Rāma politely said so, Paraśurāma snapped back at him, 'Oh Rāghava! Don't preach me by your words. Show your potent and strength and prowess by stringing this bow' (9-9½).

ततो जग्राह रोषेण क्षत्रियर्षभसूदनम्।।10।।
रामो दाशरथिर्दिव्यं हस्तादामस्य कार्मुकम्। धनुरारोपयामास सलिलमिव राघवः।।11।।

tato jagrāha roṣeṇa kṣatriyarṣabhasūdanam //
rāmo dāśarathirdivyaṃ hastādāmasya kārmukam /
dhanurāropayāmāsa salilamiva rāghavaḥ //

Then Śrī Rāma, the son of Daśaratha, angrily snatched that glorious and divine bow which had the reputation of being a vanquisher and a slayer of the Kṣatriya race from the hands of Paraśurāma and stringed it playfully (i.e. effortlessly, as if it was a sport) (10-11).

ज्याशब्दमकरोत्तत्र स्मयमानः स वीर्यवान्। तस्य शब्देन भूतानि वित्रेसुरशनेरिव।।12।।

jyāśabdamakarottatra smayamānaḥ sa vīryavān /
tasya śabdena bhūtāni vitresuraśaneriva //

The most valiant and valourous Śrī Rāma laughed and pulled the string of that bow to make a fierce twang noise from it. That sound resembled the reverberating and rolling thunder created by a bolt of lightening in the sky, and it made all the creatures terrified and stunned (12).

अथाब्रवीद्वचो रामं रामोदाशरथिस्तदा। इदमारोपितं ब्रह्मन्किमन्यत्करवाणि ते।।13।।

athābravīdvaco rāmaṃ rāmodāśarathistadā /
idamāropitaṃ brahmankimanyatkaravāṇi te //

Then Śrī Rāma, the son of Daśaratha, said sarcastically to Paraśurāma, 'Oh Brāhmin! I have stringed the bow. Now, what is the other work of yours that I can do for you?' (13).

तस्य रामौ ददौ दिव्यं जामदग्न्यो महाबलः। शरमाकर्णदेशान्तमयमाकृष्यतामिति।।14।।

tasya rāmau dadau divyaṃ jāmadagnyo mahābalaḥ /
śaramākarṇadeśāntamayamākṛṣyatāmiti //

Then Jamadagni Nandana (i.e. the son of sage Jamadagni; here referring to sage Paraśurāma) gave the most strong, valiant and powerful Śrī Rāma a glorious, majestic and divine arrow and instructed him, 'Mount this arrow on the bow and pull it (i.e. pull the string with the arrow mounted on it) right up to your ears' (14).

एतच्छ्रुत्वाब्रवीद्रामः प्रदीप्त इव मन्युना। श्रूयते क्षम्यते चैव दर्पपूर्णोऽसि भार्गव।।15।।
त्वया ह्यधिगतं तेजः क्षत्रियेभ्यो विशेषतः। पितामहप्रसादेन तेन मां क्षिपसि ध्रुवम्।।16।।

etacchrutvābravīdrāmaḥ pradīpta iva manyunā /
śrūyate kṣamyate caiva darpapūrṇo'si bhārgava //
tvayā hyadhigataṃ tejaḥ kṣatriyebhyo viśeṣataḥ /
pitāmahaprasādena tena māṃ kṣipasi dhruvam //

As soon as Śrī Rāma heard it, he was outraged and flared up angrily like a kindled fire. He severely snubbed him (Paraśurāma) and reproachfully snapped, 'Oh Bhārgava ! You are very haughty and arrogant. I hear your stern words but forgive you (15). Relying upon the potential powers, the protection and blessings of your glorious grandfather, you have got immunity from harm, and as a consequence of it you have conquered the Kṣatriya race to acquire immense fame, glory, radiance and potentials. And that is why, surely, you make wild allegations upon me and attempt to brow-beat me into submission (16). [15-16]

पश्य मां स्वेन रूपेण चक्षुस्ते वितराम्यहम्। इत्युक्त्वा प्रददौ तस्मै रामो दिव्यां दृशं तदा।।17।।

paśya māṃ svena rūpeṇa cakṣuste vitarāmyaham /
ityuktvā pradadau tasmai rāmo divyāṃ dṛśaṃ tadā //

Have a divine view of my macrocosmic form. I give you insight and divine sight to enable you to do so 'Saying this, Śrī Rāma blessed him with a divine sight that could see beyond the mundane and visible world, a sight that transcended the normal view and could see the paranormal and subtle sights which was not possible by the physical gross eyes of the body (17).

ततो रामशरीरे वै रामोऽपश्यत्स भार्गवः। आदित्यान्सवसून्रुद्रान्साध्यांश्च समरुद्गणान्।।18।।
पितॄन्हुताशनांश्चैव नक्षत्राणि ग्रहांस्तथा। गन्धर्वान् राक्षसान्यक्षात्रदीस्तीर्थानि यानि वै।।19।।
ऋषीन्वै निखिलान्यांश्च ब्रह्मभूतान्सनातनान्। देवर्षींश्चैव कार्त्स्न्येन समुद्रान्पर्वतास्तथा।।20।।
वेदांश्च सोपनिषदान्वषट्कारान्सहाध्वरैः। ऋचो यजूंषि सामानि धनुर्वेदांश्च सर्वशः।।21।।

tato rāmaśarīre vai rāmo'paśyatsa bhārgavaḥ /
ādityānsavasūnrudrānsādhyāṃśca samarudgaṇān //
pitṝnhutāśanāṃścaiva nakṣatrāṇi grahāṃstathā /
gandharvān rākṣasānyakṣātradīstīrthāni yāni vai //
ṛṣīnvai nikhilānyāṃśca brahmabhūtānsanātanān /
devarṣīścaiva kārtsnyena samudrānparvatāstathā //
vedāṃśca sopaniṣadānvaṣaṭkārānsahādhvaraiḥ /
ṛco yajūṃṣi sāmāni dhanurvedāṃśca sarvaśaḥ //

Śrī Rāma showed Bhārgava (Paraśurāma) his vast, colossus, macrocosmic and all-encompassing form that included the whole cosmos in its ambit. The sage saw the following in a personified form on the outer surface, i.e. the skin of the body of that colossus form of the Lord (almost like so many spots or hairs or moles or other bodily features on a huge giant or a mammoth)—He saw Āditya (the various forms of the mythological suns), the 8 Vasus, the 11 Rudras, the Gods who are worshipped, 49 Maruts (the Wind-Gods) (18), the Pitaras (spirits of dead ancestors), the Agni Deva (the Fire-God), the stars and planets, Gandharvas (celestial musicians), Yakṣas (semi-Gods who guard the treasure of Gods), the different rivers and the pilgrim sites (19), the eternal basic elements of creation called the Brahmā Bhūtas, the great sages Vālakhilya and Nārada, all the oceans and seas, the mountains (20), all the Upaniṣads which are integral part and the end of the different Vedas, the fire sacrifices in which the sacrificial pit is designed like a hexagon, the principle Vedas such as the Ṛg, Yajur and Sāma along with a sub Veda called Dhanur Veda (which deals with the skill and art of archery as well as the science of warfare). All these were visible on the body of the macrocosmic, colossus, vast and all-encompassing form of Śrī Rāma as the supreme divine Being that was revealed to Bhārgava Paraśurāma (21). [18-21]

[Note :—The 12 Ādityas are mythological Suns and appear as patron Gods who (i) take care of the world (Ṛg Veda, 2/27/4); are like the heads (Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa, 1/2/3/3) and eyes (Jaiminī, Uttara. 2/1/2/3) of all the creatures. These 12 Ādityas appear first in the Ṛg Veda 1/41/4-6 and 2/27. They are the sons of Aditi, the mother of Gods (Atharva Veda, 8/9/21). They are the following—8 Vasus + Indra + Sun + Viṣṇu + Śiva = 12. According to Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad 3/9/5, the 12 months of the year represent 12 Ādityas, one month for one Āditya.

The 8 Vasus are the patron Gods who provide succour and a dwelling place for the whole creation. They symbolise those primary necessities of life without which existence is not possible. They are—(i) Kubera (the God of wealth and prosperity), (ii) the Sun-God (who provides energy and food), (iii) Śiva (the concluder or annihilator of the creation), (iv) Viṣṇu (the sustainer), (v) the Water-God (called Varuṇa), (vi) the Fire-God (called Agni), (vii) the rays and radiance of the sun (i.e. sunlight and the energy that it provides), and (viii) the holy and pious people (who give advice and guidance to the creatures of the creation). According to Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad 3/9/3, the Vasus are the following—Fire, Earth, Air, Antarikṣa (the space of the solar system), Āditya (Sun), Dyuloka (heavens), the Moon and the Nakṣatras (the stars and the planets).

The 11 Rudras are the following—(i) Mannu, (ii) Manu, (iii) Mahīnasa, (iv) Mahāna, (v) Śiva, (vi) Ṛtadhvaja, (vii) Ugrareta, (viii) Bhava, (ix) Kāla, (x) Vāmadeva, (xi) Dhṛtvrata. The 11 Rudras appear in Ṛg Veda 1/43/1 and Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa 3/4/9/7. They are regarded as the father of the Wind-God or the Maruts (Ṛg Veda, 2/33/1).

The 49 Maruts—they are the Wind-Gods mentioned in Ṛg Veda, 1/37-39 and 1/165/3, 5, 7, 9. They are regarded variously as—(i) sons of Indra and Vṛṣṇī (Ṛg Veda, 2/34/2), (ii) Sons of Rudra (Ṛg Veda, 2/33/1), (iii) similar to the Fire-God (Ṛg Veda, 6/66/2), and (vi) Indra God (Ṛg Veda, 1/165, 171). The Purāṇas call them sons of sage Kaśyapa and Diti.

The Brahma Bhūtas—these are the 5 basic elements first created by Brahmā—viz. space, air, fire, water, earth.

Sage Bhārgava finds mention first in the Ṛg Veda as a great sage who was an expert in doing fire sacrifices using 'Soma' or the nectar of bliss and happiness called ambrosia. That is why he is also known as 'Somāhūti Bhārgava', i.e. one who makes an offering of Soma to the fire sacrifice as an oblation to the Gods (Ṛg Veda, 2/4/7). He is referred to in Yajur Veda, 11/70 and 12/43, and Sāma Veda 94. Since this sage was born in the linage of sage Bhṛgu, he is also known as Bhārgava. Sage Paraśurāma was born to mother Reṇukā and father Jamadagni (verse no. 2, 14 of this Canto respectively.]

विद्युतो मेघवृन्दानि वर्षाणि च महाव्रत। ततः स भगवान्विष्णुस्तं वै बाणं मुमोच ह।।22।।
शुष्काशनि समाकीर्णं महोल्काभिश्च सुव्रतः। पासुवर्षेण महता मेघसंघैश्च केवलम्।।23।।

vidyuto meghavṛndāni varṣāṇi ca mahāvrata /
tataḥ sa bhagavānviṣṇustaṃ vai bāṇaṃ mumoca ha //
śuṣkāśani samākīrṇaṃ maholkābhiśca suvrataḥ /
pāsuvarṣeṇa mahatā meghasaṃghaiśca kevalam //

Oh the one who is steadfast in keeping stern religious vows ! Huge banks of dark clouds, rains and bolts of lightening were also perceptible in Śrī Rāma's colossus form. Then Śrī Rāma, in his divine form as Lord Viṣṇu, shot that invincible arrow (22). Oh the one who keeps righteous vows ! At that instant, the whole earth was enveloped in a tumultuous thunder created by bolts of lightening streaking across the sky in every direction even without a trace of cloud appearing anywhere, while spluttering, sizzling, hissing and scintillating meteors and meteorites appeared to shower on it from all the directions everywhere. A fierce howling storm with dark foreboding clouds arose and dust rained in all the corners of the earth (23). [22-23]

[Note :—This is a horrible and most terrifying scenario resembling the events of the dooms day. Śrī Rāma's anger and the powerful arrow unleashed such great energy as if a huge atomic bomb had been detonated in the atmosphere, or a meteor had landed on the earth's surface after it was shot down from the outer space on being hit by Śrī Rāma's arrows.]

भूमिकम्पैः सनिर्घातैर्नादैश्च विपुलैरपि। भार्गवं विह्वलं कृत्वा तेजश्चाक्षिप्य केवलम्।।24।।
आगच्छज्ज्वलितो रामं बाणो बहुप्रचोदितः।। 24½।।

bhūmikampaiḥ sanirghātairnādaiśca vipulairapi /
bhārgavaṃ vihvalaṃ kṛtvā tejaścākṣipya kevalam //
āgacchajjvalito rāmaṃ bāṇo bahupracoditaḥ /

The earth shook violently and repeatedly (i.e. there were repeated shocks of earth quakes). There were horrendous, terrifying, eerie sounds which reverberated and echoed everywhere; these sounds resembled the rumble and thunder of clouds during a severe thunderstorm, and other sounds which portended doom and destruction were also heard. That arrow which was shot by Śrī Rāma represented the strength of his invincible arms, and it glowed like a lancet of fiercely burning fire. It made Bhārgava (Paraśurāma) very much tormented, bewildered and extremely terrified and dazed. It neutralised his immense powers and potentials (i.e. it virtually short-circuited his energy) and then came back to Śrī Rāma (even as a bolt of lightening pulls back into the clouds and disappears in it) (24½). [24-24½]

[Note :—The 'voltage of energy' in Śrī Rāma's arrow was a thousand times more strong than what Paraśurāma possessed. Naturally, it 'short-circuited' his charges, blew his fuse of agility, vitality, thrust and punch of which he was so proud of, it melted his arrogance, haughtiness, ego and hypocrisy, leaving him crestfallen, flaccid and limp in his limbs, dazed, confused, perturbed, stunned, dumbfounded, listless and consternated so much so that he fainted, as is evident from the next verse.

After that, the bolt of electric reverted back to the point where there was a high voltage tower standing, as it were, and this tower represented Śrī Rāma to which this bolt of powerful electric discharge reverted. This analogy of the 'electric discharge and a high voltage neutralizing and blowing the fuse and melting the wire of a low voltage apparatus' is used by this author to explain in modern terms what actually might have happened at that time.]

स तु विह्वलतां गत्वा प्रतिलभ्य च चेतनाम्।।25।।
रामः प्रत्यागतप्राणः प्राणमद्विष्णुतेजसम्। विष्णुना सोऽभ्यनुज्ञातो महेन्द्रमगमत्पुनः।।26।।
भीतश्च तत्र न्यवसद्विनीतश्च महातपाः।। 26½।।

sa tu vihvalatāṃ gatvā pratilabhya ca cetanām //
rāmaḥ pratyāgataprāṇaḥ prāṇamadviṣṇutejasam /
viṣṇunā so'bhyanujñāto mahendramagamatpunaḥ //
bhītaśca tatra nyavasadvinītaśca mahātapāḥ /

When he (Paraśurāma) regained his composure and consciousness, he felt as if he has got a new lease of life after death. He got up and reverentially bowed to Śrī Rāma who was radiantly glowing with the divine splendour so characteristic of Lord Viṣṇu. After that, he took permission from Viṣṇu who was in the form of Śrī Rāma and went back to Mt. Mahendra (to do Tapa). Ashamed and ashen faced, contrite, dejected, consternated and regretful to the core, he started doing severe Tapa (i.e. severe austerity, penances and adhering to strict religious vows) once again to regain his lost glory, honour, strength and powers (25-26 ½).

ततः स्मवत्सरेऽतीते हृतौजसमवस्थितम्।।27।।
निर्मदं दुःखितं दृष्ट्वा पितरौ राममब्रुवन्।। 27½।।

tataḥ smavatsare'tīte hṛtaujasamavasthitam //
nirmadaṃ duḥkhitaṃ dṛṣṭvā pitarau rāmamabruvan /

When one year had passed, the 'Pitaras' (spirits of dead ancestors) saw Paraśurāma in a dull hapless and helpless state; he was crestfallen and very sad, and had no ego, pride, arrogance and haughtiness left in him any more. They advised him as follows—(27-27½).

न वै सम्यगिदं पुत्र विष्णुमासाद्य वै कृतम्।। 28।।
स हि पूज्यश्च मानयश्च त्रिषु लोकेषु सर्वदा।। 28½।।

na vai samyagidaṃ putra viṣṇumāsādya vai kṛtam //
sa hi pūjyaśca mānayaśca triṣu lokeṣu sarvadā /

'Oh son! The way you had arrogantly misbehaved in front of Viṣṇu was not at all the proper way to act and was most disgraceful for you. He (Viṣṇu as Śrī Rāma) is most revered, worshipped, honoured and adored in all the three worlds (i.e. in the terrestrial, nether and the heavenly worlds) (28-28½).

गच्छ पुत्र नदीं पुण्यां वधूसरकृताह्वयाम्।।29।।
तत्रोपस्पृश्य तीर्थेषु पुनर्वपुरवाप्स्यसि।। 29½।।
gaccha putra nadīṃ puṇyāṃ vadhūsarakṛtāhvayām //
tatropaspṛśya tīrtheṣu punarvapuravāpsyasi /

Now go to the banks of the holy river called Vadhūsara. By bathing in the pilgrim and holy site located on its banks, you would get back your lost glory and potentials (29-29½).

दीप्तोदं नाम तत्तीर्थं यत्र ते प्रपितामहः।।30।।
भृगुर्देवयुगे राम तप्तवानुत्तमं तपः।। 30½।।
dīptodaṃ nāma tattīrthaṃ yatra te prapitāmahaḥ //
bhṛgurdevayuge rāma taptavānuttamaṃ tapaḥ /

There is a special place there called 'Dīptodaka' (literally meaning a place which bestows glory, radiance, energy, splendour, majesty and powers). It is the place where your great grandfather (ancestor) named Bhṛgu had done perfect and severe Tapa in some previous time called 'Devayuga' ' (30-30½).

[Note :—Note no. 6 of verse no. 18-21 of this Canto tells us about sage Bhṛgu. The first era of the 4-era celestial cycle is Satyuga. This is also known as Devayuga and the 'Vedic period' because fire sacrifices were the chief avenues for worshipping Gods, the Devas. Among the renowned sages who performed such sacrifices, one was sage Bhṛgu who was the ancestor of Paraśurāma. Śrī Rāma has chided Paraśurāma and had explicitly told him that the powers that the latter boasts so much of are due to the good deeds done by his ancestors—see verse no. 16 of this Canto.]

तत्तथा कृतवान्रामो भार्गवो वचनान्पितुः।।31।।
प्राप्तवांश्च पुनस्तेजो भारद्वाज महामुने। 31½।
tattathā kṛtavānrāmo bhārgavo vacanānpituḥ //
prāptavāṃśca punastejo bhāradvāja mahāmune /

Bhārgava (Paraśurāma) did as was advised by the Pitaras. Oh great sage Bhāradvāja! He bathed in those holy sites and regained his lost 'Teja—i.e. he got back his lost energy, vitality, glory, majesty, radiance, potentials, strength and powers (31-31½).

एतद्यः शृणुयाद्वत्स रामचरित्रमुत्तमम्।।32।।
सर्वपापविनिर्मुक्तो विष्णुलोकं स गच्छति। 32½।

etadyaḥ śṛṇuyādvatsa rāmacaritramuttamam //
sarvapāpavinirmukto viṣṇulokaṃ sa gacchati /

Oh son (Bhāradvāja) ! Anyone who hears this magnificent and excellent story or episode pertaining to Śrī Rāma meeting Paraśurāma and showing him his divine form is freed from the ill effects of his sins and misdeeds, and he attains the divine abode of Viṣṇu, called Vaikuṇṭha (32-32½).

ततो रामो जानकीस्पृष्टपाणिः सूतैर्भक्त्या मागधैः स्तूयमानः।
पुष्पासारैरास्तृतो देवसंघैः स उत्तराङ्कोसलानाजगाम।।33।।

tato rāmo jānakīspṛṣṭapāṇiḥ sūtairbhaktyā māgadhaiḥ stūyamānaḥ /
puṣpāsārairāstṛto devasaṃghaiḥ sa uttarānkosalānājagāma //

After this interlude, Śrī Rāma held the hands of Jānakī (his wife Sītā, the daughter of Janaka) and being worshipped, honoured, praised, lauded, admired and glorified by the royal bards and minstrels called Sūta and Māgadha as well as by his devotees, he resumed his journey back home. The throng of Gods rained flowers over him and his party as they wended their way back to Ayodhyā and entered the northern boarders of the country called Kauśala (33).

[Note :—(i) The Sūta and Māgadha were professional singers employed by the kings to sing their glories and laud their achievements. (ii) Ayodhyā was the capital city of the country known as Kauśala. It had geographical divisions, such as the north and the east country. The place of Sītā's parents was to the north of this country. So the marriage party reentered their kingdom from the northern borders located near the present day country called Nepal.]

Thus ends Canto 9 of the ancient epic Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa written by sage Vālmīki describing how and why Śrī Rāma showed his vast, macrocosmic divine form as Lord Viṣṇu to sage Paraśurāma.

* * *

Canto 10

Śrī Rāma meets Hanumāna and shows him his 4-armed divine form as Viṣṇu

After Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa went to exile in the forest with Sītā, she was abducted by the 10-headed Rāvaṇa. While frantically searching for her, the two brothers Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa came to Ṛṣyamūka Mountain where Sugrīva, the exiled monkey king, lived out of fear of his brother Vālī. When he saw them approaching, he thought they are out there on the behest of Vālī to kill him. So he sent Hanumāna down from the mountain to find out the fact. Hanumāna and Śrī Rāma showed each other their true divine forms for a split second for identifying themselves to each other. Śrī Rāma revealed his form as Lord Viṣṇu and Lakṣmaṇa as Śeṣanātha, the legendary python on whom Lord Viṣṇu reclines in the Kṣīrasāgara or the ocean of milk in the heavens. Though not specifically mentioned in the text, verse no. 12 clearly indicates that Hanumāna revealed to him his truthful form, which was Rudra or Lord Śiva. This Canto is a sort of prologue to spiritual discourses between Śrī Rāma and Hanumāna in the next 4 Cantos, nos. 11-14.

We must also note here that sage Vālmīki has skipped all other parts of the story, between Śrī Rāma meeting Paraśurāma and his meeting with Hanumāna, to cut short unnecessary details. The reason has been explained in the preface of this book. The reader will observe that those parts of the legendry story of Rāmāyaṇa that have already been narrated by Vālmīki in detail in his classical epic 'Rāmāyaṇa' have been given a goodbye in this book, and only those episodes which were necessary and thought important by Vālmīki to fill in the gap left in his aforesaid epic have been mentioned here. We must remember that this Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa describes only those parts of Śrī Rāma's story that have been kept secret and under wraps by Brahmā and Vālmīki till this was disclosed by the latter in this current book, the Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa. The emphasis is on the divinity of Sītā as Mother Nature personified and the killing of the thousand headed Rāvaṇa which is the focal point of this book.

अथ सीतालक्ष्मणाभ्यां सह केनापि हेतुना। जगाम विपिनं रामो दण्डकारण्यमाश्रितः ।।1।।

atha sītālakṣmaṇābhyāṃ saha kenāpi hetunā /
jagāma vipinaṃ rāmo daṇḍakāraṇyamāśritaḥ //

In due course of time, Śrī Rāma, along with Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa, went to the forest for some reason and stayed there in a forest called Daṇḍakāraṇya (1).

तत्र गोदावरीतीरे पर्णशालां विधाय सः। उवास कंचित्कालं वै मृगयामभिकारयन्।।2।।

tatra godāvarītīre parṇaśālāṃ vidhāya saḥ /
uvāsa kaṃcitkālaṃ vai mṛgayāmabhikārayan //

He built a thatched hut or cottage there on the banks of river Godāvarī and stayed there for some time, spending his time on occasional hunting expeditions (2).

रावणो राक्षसेन्द्रोऽथ कालपाशनियन्त्रितः। रामेण लक्ष्मेणनापि रहितां जानकीं ततः।।3।।
कदाचिद्रावणो मोहाल्लङ्कायां तां न्यवासयत्।। 3½।।

rāvaṇo rākṣasendro'tha kālapāśaniyantritaḥ /
rāmeṇa lakṣmeṇanāpi rahitāṃ jānakīṃ tataḥ //
kadācidrāvaṇo mohāllaṅkāyāṃ tāṃ nyavāsayat /

After some time, the king of demons, the 10-headed Rāvaṇa, who was under the delusionary evil spell or influence of Kāla, the death God (i.e. was tied and shackled by the God of death who had cast his magic spell of delusions upon him, preparing the background for his ultimate death), abducted Jānakī (Sītā) in the absence of Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. Out of his passion and lust ignited by delusions and ignorance (called Moha), Rāvaṇa took her away and held her captive in Laṅkā, his capital city (3-3½).

[Note :—It is not mentioned here that Śrī Rāma, who was all knowing, omniscient and the supreme Lord personified, knew before hand what is to come. So he had hidden the real Sītā in the custody of the Fire-God, and what Rāvaṇa managed to take away was merely a shadow of the true Sītā. Veda Vyāsa' Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa tells us that Rāvaṇa could not realise the trick played upon him by Śrī Rāma because he hadn't touched Sītā in order to take her away because he had simply 'scooped up' the ground from below the feet of Sītā and transplanted her on to his chariot as if a person is transplanting a sapling from one place in the garden to another. Had he tried to hold her hands or grasp her by the body or her hair in order to pull her forcibly on to the chariot in order to kidnap her, the truth that she was merely a shadow must have been revealed to him and the whole story would have cracked and dismantled like a pack of cards. So this is the effect of delusion and ignorance called Moha and Māyā that had enabled Śrī Rāma to successfully eliminate him.]

तामदृष्ट्वा ततो रामो लक्ष्मणश्च महाबलः ।।4।।
आटतुश्चाटवीं सर्वां सीतादर्शनलालसौ। रामस्य रुदतस्तस्य वाष्पवारिसमुद्भवा ।।5।।

tāmadṛṣṭvā tato rāmo lakṣmaṇaśca mahābalaḥ //
āṭatuścāṭavīṃ sarvāṃ sītādarśanalālasau /
rāmasya rudatastasya vāṣpavārisamudbhavā //

Not finding her at their cottage, the most valorous, strong and powerful Ṣrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa wandered here and there in the forest, urgently and frantically searching for her, eager to see her once again. Streams of tears rolled down the eyes of Śrī Rāma as he wailed and lamented for her (4-5).

नदी वैतरणी चाभूच्चक्षुषोरश्रुवुद्भवा। वितरत्यश्रु वै यस्मादतो वैतरणीस्मृता ।।6।।

nadī vaitaraṇī cābhūccakṣuṣoraśruvudbhavā /
vitaratyaśru vai yasmādato vaitaraṇīsmṛtā //

He wept so much that a river called 'Vaitaraṇī' was formed by his tears. Since the river had its origin in tears shed in adverse and tormenting circumstances marked by sorrows, anguish, separation from one's beloved and seemingly insurmountable troubles, it was called by this name 'Vai Taraṇī' (6).

[Note :—There are two types of tears—one shed in joy and the other shed in extreme anguish and great pain. Sītā was lost, and Śrī Rāma's tears were shed in sorrow. The word 'Taraṇī' means 'one that liberates and provides deliverance from sorrows and torments of this world', while the prefix 'Vai' means 'the opposite'. Hence, Vai + Taraṇī signifies a river that stands for one getting entangled in a web of sorrows, anguish and troubles which are most difficult to overcome.]

पितॄणां तरणं यस्मान्मातॄणां स्नानतर्पणात्। तेनापि कारणेनासौ नदी वैतरणी स्मृता ।।7।।

pitṝṇāṃ taraṇaṃ yasmānmātṝṇāṃ snānatarpaṇāt /
tenāpi kāraṇenāsau nadī vaitaraṇī smṛtā //

There is another river known by the same name of Vaitaraṇī. The spirits of person's dead ancestors find liberation and deliverance as well as fulfilment and contentedness by bathing and offering libations in it (7).

[Note :—This is a different mythological river. According to Purāṇas, it flows in front of the gate of the God of death, Yama's place. It is believed that the spirits of dead ancestors have to take a bath in this river before they find liberation from their 'spirit' form. The annual ritual of offering oblation and libation to dead ancestors symbolically marks the occasion when they bathe in the river and pass on to liberation.]

नेत्रयोर्दूषिकायाश्च ताभिः शैलास्ततोऽभवन्। सुग्रीवेण वानरेण सख्यं कर्तु महामनाः।।8।।
ऋष्यमूकमगाद्रामो लक्ष्मणेनानुजेन च।। 8½।।

netrayordūṣikāyāśca tābhiḥ śailāstato'bhavan /
sugrīveṇa vānareṇa sakhyaṃ kartu mahāmanāḥ //
ṛṣyamūkamagādrāmo lakṣmaṇenānujena ca /

The slime of his eyes that came down with the tears formed mountains and hills when they dried up. After that, the great and noble gentleman (Śrī Rāma), in order to befriend the monkey king Sugrīva (8), went to the mountain called Ṛṣyamūka, accompanied by his younger brother Lakṣmaṇa (8½). [8-8½]

[Note :—According to Vālmīki's epic story 'Rāmāyaṇa' and Tulasīdāsa' 'Rāma Carita Mānasa, Śrī Rāma had met Śabarī after the abduction of Sītā. It was she who had advised him to go and meet Sugrīva who would help him in searching for and retrieving Sītā.]

पञ्चभिर्मन्त्रिभिः सार्द्धं सुग्रीवो नाम वानरः।।9।।
यत्रास्ते वालिभ्यतः सोऽपश्यद्रामलक्ष्मणौ। चापबाणधरौ वीरौ ग्रसन्ताविव चाम्बरम्।।10।।

pañcabhirmantribhiḥ sārddha sugrīvo nāma vānaraḥ //
yatrāste vālibhyataḥ so'paśyadrāmalakṣmaṇau /
cāpabāṇadharau vīrau grasantāviva cāmbaram //

The monkey named Sugrīva lived there along with 5 of his ministers (9) out of fear of his elder brother Vālī. He saw the brave and strong Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa come that way. They held bows in their hands and appeared ready to 'devour the sky' (i.e. it appeared that they were ready to conquer and annihilate the world if the need arises) (10). [9-10]

[Note :—The word 'Grasanta' literally means 'to eclipse or devour'. When the shadow of the earth falls on the moon during the lunar 'eclipse', it is said the moon was 'devoured' by Rāhu, the severed head of a demon. This is a figure of speech to indicate the angry demeanours and postures of Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa who were restlessly searching for Sītā in the desolate and inhospitable forest. Therefore, they were very alert and vigilant for any unforeseen danger that might be lurking anywhere in the darkness of the forest. This made them look very fearful and ready to attack at the slightest provocation.]

तौ दृष्ट्वा सुमहत्त्रस्तौ वालिपक्षावमन्यत। प्रास्थापयद्धनूमन्तं भिक्षुरूपेण वानरम्।।11।।

tau dṛṣṭvā sumahattrastau vālipakṣāvamanyata /
prāsthāpayaddhanūmantaṃ bhikṣurūpeṇa vānaram //

When Sugrīva saw them, he thought that they were Vālī's sympathisers (or were sent by him to kill him, because Vālī could not settle squares with his younger brother personally). Consequentially, he (Sugrīva) was extremely terrified and tormented by fear. Then he sent Hanumāna in the form of a mendicant or a recluse monk, who goes around to beg for food, to meet Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa and find out the fact and the purpose of their visit (11).

[Note :—The cause of animosity and bad blood between Sugrīva, the younger brother, and Vālī, the elder brother, was pure misunderstanding. Briefly, it so happened that Vālī was challenged for a duel by a demon called Māyāvī (literally, the clever, deceitful one) whom Vālī beat back. Fighting each other they entered a deep cave. Sugrīva waited at the entrance of the cave for one month, and seeing blood streaming out of it, he thought that his brother has been killed by the demon. Fearing for his life, he shut the mouth of the cave with a heavy boulder and rushed back to the capital Kiṣkindhā. Much against his wishes, the ministers anointed him as the king. Meanwhile, Vālī vanquished the demon and returned home to find Sugrīva on the throne. Instead of clarifying the situation and finding out the truth about what has happened, he flew into a vicious rage because he thought that Sugrīva had usurped the crown. Vowing revenge, he beat his younger brother black and blue and chased him away from the kingdom. Sugrīva took refuge on Ṛṣyamūka because Vālī suffered from a curse that if he ever came there, he would die. So, Sugrīva felt secure on this mountain.]

आत्मानं दर्शयामास हनूमान्रामलक्ष्मणौ। को भवानिति चोक्तेऽथ चतुर्बाहुं किरीटिनम्।।12।।
शङ्खचक्रगदापाणिं वनमालाविभूषितम्। श्रीवत्सवक्षसं देवं पीतवाससमच्युतम्।।13।।

ātmānaṃ darśayāmāsa hanūmānrāmalakṣmaṇau /
ko bhavāniti cokte'tha caturbāhuṃ kirīṭinam //
śaṅkhacakragadāpāṇiṃ vanamālāvibhūṣitam /
śrīvatsavakṣasaṃ devaṃ pītavāsasamacyutam //

Hanumāna showed his true form to them. Then he asked them who they were. After that, he (Hanumāna) saw the form of Śrī Rāma with four arms, having a divine and radiant crown and tiara on his head (12), holding a conch, the discus and the mace in his hands, adorned by a garland of marigold flowers, having the mark of Śrīvatsa on his chest and wearing the garment known as Pītāmbara. That form is known as 'Acyuta' (i.e. one who can never fall from his immaculate and exalted stature; one who is imperishable, indestructible and eternal) (13). [12-13].

[Note :—(i) The word 'Ātmā' indicates the true identity of a person as opposed to his physical bodily appearance. So, when Hanumāna revealed his true identity to Śrī Rāma, it was that of Rudra or Lord Śiva whose incarnation Hanumāna was. At this cue, Śrī Rāma decided to reveal to him his own true identity, and that was of Lord Viṣṇu with four arms. As is clear from the text, not much was said or asked between the two, Śrī Rāma and Hanumāna. There was no better introduction than disclosing their true forms to each other in silence to remove any misgivings on either side.

(ii) 'Śrīvatsa' is the mark of sage Bhṛgu's foot print on Viṣṇu's chest. See also Canto 2, verse no. 22.

(iii) 'Pītāmbara' is a silk, seamless body wrapping yellow garment worn by Viṣṇu and all his incarnations, such as Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Nṛsiṃha, Vāmana etc.]

लक्ष्मीं सरस्वतीभ्यां स संश्रितोभयपार्श्वकम्। ब्रह्मपुत्रैः सनन्दाद्यैः स्तूयमानं समन्ततः।।14।।
देवर्षिपितृगन्धर्वैः सिद्धविद्याधरोरगैः। सेव्यमानं महात्मानं पुण्डरीकविलोचनम्।।15।।

lakṣmīṃ sarasvatībhyāṃ sa saṃśritobhayapārśvakam /
brahmaputraiḥ sanandādyaiḥ stūyamānaṃ samantataḥ //
devarṣipitṛgandharvaiḥ siddhavidyādharoragaiḥ /
sevyamānaṃ mahātmānaṃ puṇḍarīkavilocanam //

He (Hanumāna) saw that he (Śrī Rāma in his divine true form as Viṣṇu) was being attended to by Goddesses Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī who were present on his either sides (Lakṣmī on the left and Sarasvatī on the right). His glories and praises were being sung by Brahmā's son Sananda and others who stood surrounding him reverentially (14). The Gods, the celestial sage Nārada and other sages called Deva Ṛṣis, Pitaras (spirit of dead ancestors), Gandharvas (celestial musicians; semi-Gods), Siddhas (mystics with divine powers), Vidyādharas (a type of semi-God who is senior to other semi-Gods such as Gandharvas and Kinnaras), Urags (the legendary serpents and other reptiles) as well as great sages and seers and other great souls, were also accompanying them (Sananda and other sons of Brahmā) in singing the glories of the Lord Viṣṇu (15). [14-15]

सहस्त्र सूर्यसङ्काशं शतचन्द्रशुभाननम्। फणासहस्त्रमतुलं धारयन्तं च लक्ष्मणम्।।16।।
अनन्तं रामशिरसि आतपत्रं फणागणैः। दधानं सर्वलोकेशं नागसंघैश्च संस्तुतम्।।17।।

sahasra sūryasaṅkāśaṃ śatacandraśubhānanam /
phaṇāsahasramatulaṃ dhārayantaṃ ca lakṣmaṇam //
anantaṃ rāmaśirasi ātapatraṃ phaṇāgaṇaiḥ /
dadhānaṃ sarvalokeśaṃ nāgasaṃghaiśca saṃstutam //

Hanumāna saw the divine form of Lakṣmaṇa as the one thouasand hooded legendary serpent (called Śeṣanātha), who was splendorous and dazzling like one thouasand suns shining simultaneously, whose beautiful face resembled a hundred moons, who is unique, unparalleled and one of his kind, who is eternal and infinite—standing there with all his thousand hoods spread like an umbrella over the head of Śrī Rāma. He (Lakṣmaṇa) was being worshipped, honoured, praised and adored by hordes of other great legendary serpents and reptiles as the lord of all world (16-17).

आत्मानं दर्शयामास रामचन्द्रो हनूमते। तद्रूपं हनूमन्वीक्ष्य किमेतदिति विस्मितः।।18।।

ātmānaṃ darśayāmāsa rāmacandro hanūmate /
tadrūpaṃ hanūmanvīkṣya kimetaditi vismitaḥ //

When Śrī Rāma showed Hanumāna his true form (or, revealed to him his true identity as Lord Viṣṇu), the latter was astonished and awestruck, wandering 'what is this' ? (18).

क्षणं निमील्य नयने पुनः सोऽयपश्यदद्भुतम्। स्तुत्वा नत्वा च बहुधा सोऽब्रवीद्राघवं वचः।।19।।

kṣaṇaṃ nimīlya nayane punaḥ so'yapaśyadadbhutam /
stutvā natvā ca bahudhā so'bravīdrāghavaṃ vacaḥ //

He (Hanumāna) closed his eyes in amazement for a second, opened them again to see the same strange and mysterious but marvelous, magnificent and stupendous sight. Then Hanumāna bowed his head before Rāghava repeatedly and prayed to him, saying—(19).

अहं सुग्रीवसचिवो हनूमान्राम वानरः। सुग्रीवेण प्रेषितोऽहं युवां कौ ज्ञातुमागतः।।20।।
दृष्ट्वा युवां च द्विभुजौ चापबाणधरौ परम्। आगत्य चान्यथा दृष्टं वद मे को भवानिति।।21।।

ahaṃ sugrīvasacivo hanūmānrāma vānaraḥ /
sugrīveṇa preṣito'haṃ yuvāṃ kau jñātumāgataḥ //
dṛṣṭvā yuvāṃ ca dvibhujau cāpabāṇadharau param /
āgatya cānyathā dṛṣṭaṃ vada me ko bhavāniti //

'I am Hanumāna, the minister of the monkey (king) called Sugrīva. He has sent me to determine who you are (20). Seeing that you hold a bow and arrow in your hands, he has construed that you have come here with some malefide intentions. Hence, tell me who you actually are?' (21). [20-21]

इति पवनसुतं तं व्याकुलं व्याहरन्तं। किमिति कथामितीदं कम्पमानं प्लवङ्गम्।
कृतकरपुटमौलि संविधेयं ब्रुवन्तं। मधुरतरमुदारं रामचन्द्रोऽब्रवीत्तम्।।22।।

iti pavanasutaṃ taṃ vyākulaṃ vyāharantaṃ /
kimiti kathāmitīdaṃ kampamānaṃ plavaṅgam /
kṛtakaraputạmauli saṃvidheyaṃ bruvantaṃ /
madhurataramudāraṃ rāmacandro'bravīttam //

When Śrī Rāma saw the son of the Wind-God (Hanumāna) in a nervous, confused, perplexed and agitated state after having a divine glimpse of Śrī Rāma's vast macrocosmic form as Viṣṇu, standing before him with a bowed head and a trembling body, folding the hands in front of the chest as a gesture of submission, respect and honour, Śrī Rāma Candra replied to him in a sweet, pleasant, most comforting, benevolent, munificent and kind voice (22).

Thus ends Canto 10 of the ancient epic called Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa written by sage Vālmīki describing Hanumāna's meeting with Śrī Rāma.

* * *

Canto 11

Śrī Rāma describes profound metaphysical and spiritual concept to Hanumāna highlighting the various aspects of 'Sāṅkhya Śāstra'

In this Canto, Śrī Rāma describes to Hanumāna what is known as Sāṅkhya Śāstra (see verse no. 42). This body of knowledge was first propounded and postulated by sage Kapila and it is one of the 6 schools of Indian philosophy. It forms the basis of Vedānta which is the philosophy of the Upaniṣad; both these philosophies—Sāṅkhya and Vedānta—coexist, complementing and supplementing each other just like the two wheels of a chariot. Basically, it deals with the Ātmā and its characteristics. Brief explanatory notes are added to the verses to bring out the meaning clearly. This Canto summarises the Sāṅkhya philosophy in its essence; it is a sort of commentary summarising its essential tenets.

रामःप्राह हनूमन्तमात्मानं पुरुषोत्तमः। वत्स वत्स हनूमन्स्त्वं भक्तोयत्पृष्ट्वानसि।।1।।
तत्तऽहं सम्प्रवक्ष्यामि शृणुष्वावहितो मम। आवच्च्मेतद्विज्ञानमात्मगुह्यं सनातनम्।।2।।

rāmaḥprāha hanūmantamātmānaṃ puruṣottamaḥ /
vatsa vatsa hanūmanstvaṃ bhaktoyatpṛṣṭvānasi //
tatt'haṃ sampravakṣyāmi śṛṇuṣvāvahito mama /
āvaccametadvijñānamātmaguhyaṃ sanātanam //

Puruṣottama Rāma (literally meaning the most excellent, the most exalted and the best human being; here referring to the supreme being in the form of Śrī Rāma) began to tell Hanumāna about his Ātmā which is the true identity, the pure and real conscious self of an individual.

He said, 'Oh son Hanumāna ! Oh son, you are my sincere and ardent devotee. I shall answer the question which you have asked me (in Canto 10, verse no. 12 and 18)—'Who are you?' Listen carefully. This secret and mysterious but marvelously fascinating and profound knowledge about the Ātmā (soul) is truthful, universal, immutable, irrefutable and eternal. It should not be divulged to everyone (i.e. it should be given to only those people who are eligible and competent to acquire it, otherwise they will mock at it, deride and ridicule it in their utter ignorance) (1-2).

यन्न देवा विजानन्ति यतन्तोऽपि द्विजातयः। इदं ज्ञानं समाश्रित्य ब्रह्मभूता द्विजोत्तमाः।।3।।
न संसारं प्रपश्यन्ति पूर्वेऽपि ब्रह्मवादिनः। गुह्याद्गुह्यतमं साक्षाद्गोपनीयं प्रयत्नतः।।4।।

yanna devā vijānanti yatanto'pi dvijātayaḥ /
idaṃ jñānaṃ samāśritya brahmabhūtā dvijottamāḥ //
na saṃsāraṃ prapaśyanti pūrve'pi brahmavādinaḥ /
guhyādguhyatamaṃ sākṣādgopanīyaṃ prayatnataḥ //

This supreme and profound truthful knowledge is not known even to the Gods and the upper classes of people in society (who are intelligent and wise and are supposed to have a better and higher level of understanding and intellect than people lower down in the rung of social hierarchy who are supposed to have inferior level of intellect). If this knowledge is acquired by making diligent efforts and sincere commitment, then it elevates an ordinary Brāhmin called a

Dvija to an exalted and senior stature which is equivalent to that of Brahmā. [That is, a person who is aware of the knowledge pertaining to Ātmā and Brahma becomes more respected, revered and honoured even among those who are generally given respect by the society. In fact, they attain the pinnacle of spiritual elevation by this knowledge and are worthy of special honour.] (3)

When those erudite, sagacious and wise ones, who were already aware of the Ātmā and Brahma, come to acquire this supreme truthful knowledge, they cease to 'see or perceive' the external illusionary and artificial world. This most secret of knowledge is to be carefully kept under guard and is not to be divulged to unworthy and incompetent persons (4). [3-4]

[Note :—(i) The word 'Dvija' refers to Brāhmins who are the learned and wise teacher class of people in society. They are generally given blanket respect by virtue of their high birth. They learn the scriptures, but if this learning is limited to mere 'letters' and they do not understand the 'spirit' of the words formed by the letters, and even if they do understand the 'letter as well as the spirit', they have doubts in the veracity of the scriptures, and even if they do not have doubts, they do not practice what they preach and that knowledge hasn't opened their 'inner eyes' sufficiently enough to enable them to realise that the world that they see is simply a 'mirage', an illusionary smoke screen, an 'image' and not the 'object' whose image it is, then they may be scholars of the highest degree and repute but they aren't categorised as 'being enlightened and realised souls'. They may be wise and clever enough to acquire wealth, fame and worldly glories with that knowledge, but they are 'stupid of the highest order' if they do not spiritually benefit from the supreme knowledge themselves which they preach others to acquire. This is the implied meaning of verse no. 3—when a learned person sees that supreme Brahma in each and every element of the world, when he does not see the physical characteristic of the external world, when he does not distinguish between creatures based on their colour, class, nationality etc. but begin to see them all alike in their Ātmā, then they see the supreme, transcendental and sublime Brahma in each and every figure and shape of the world. They become mentally and intellectually elevated and stand on a high spiritual pedestal. It is only then that they are called the most exalted Brāhmin.

Further, the word Dvijātaye literally means 'the upper other castes', such as the Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas, besides the Brāhmins. To include these other 2 classes of people who are mainly concerned with the protection of the society and taking care of its needs respectively, sage Vālmīki intends to drive home the point that knowledge of Brahma is not a copyright of Brāhmins alone. If a Vaiśya is enlightened enough to 'see or perceive' the subtle, supreme Brahma in the whole visible external façade of this gross world, while a Brāhmin 'sees or perceives' the world only in its gross form, then surely the former person (the Vaiśya) is much superior to the latter person (the Brāhmin) in his spiritual elevation.]

वंशे भक्तिमतो ह्यस्य भवन्ति ब्रह्मवादिनः। आत्मा यः केवलः स्वच्छः शान्तः सूक्ष्मः सनातनः॥5॥

vaṃśe bhaktimato hyasya bhavanti brahmavādinaḥ /
ātmā yaḥ kevalaḥ svacchaḥ śāntaḥ sūkṣmaḥ sanātanaḥ //

Those people who know 'this fact' (i.e. are aware of the facts about the truthful nature of Ātmā and Brahma, and are enlightened enough not to be mislead about the falsehoods of this illusionary world), have devotees of the Lord who are wise, erudite and enlightened about the essence of the supreme, transcendental and sublime Brahmā in their family and clan.

[Now, sage Vālmīki elaborates and elucidates on 'this' most profound, elementary, sublime and eclectic, universally truthful, irrefutable and immutable knowledge which makes a man revered and enlightened. He said to Bhāradvāja—] 'The Ātmā (soul) is the only entity which is one of its kind and pristine pure and immaculate, it is undiluted, uncorrupt and untarnished, it is peaceful, tranquil, serene and calm, it is subtle and microscopic, and it is eternal, everlasting, universal and truthful (5).

अस्ति सर्वान्तरः साक्षाच्चिन्मात्रस्तमसः परः। सोऽन्तर्यामी स पुरुषः स प्राणः स महेश्वरः॥6॥

asti sarvāntaraḥ sākṣāccinmātrastamasaḥ paraḥ /
so'ntaryāmī sa puruṣaḥ sa prāṇaḥ sa maheśvaraḥ //

It (the Ātmā) resides in the bosom of all that exists in this creation. It is verily the pure, supreme, transcendental consciousness personified and it is beyond the negative traits symbolised by such negative qualities as 'Tama' or darkness, ignorance, delusions, perversions, evils, misdeeds etc. It knows the inner thoughts and feelings of all the creatures because it resides in their bosom; it is known by the name of 'Puruṣa' (literally, a male, but here referring to the Supreme Being who is the Lord of the creation, the Virāṭ Puruṣa who is the macrocosmic male aspect of creation). It is also known as

'Prāṇa' or the vital wind which infuses the all-important factor called 'life' into an otherwise dead, gross creature, and it is none other than 'Maheśvara' (literally meaning the great Lord of creation, Lord Śiva) (6).

स कालाग्निस्तदव्यक्तं सद्यो वेदयति श्रुतिः। कस्माद्विजायते विश्वमत्रैव प्रविलीयते।।7।।

sa kālāgnistadavyaktaṃ sadyo vedayati śrutiḥ /
kasmādvijāyate viśvamatraiva pravilīyate //

The hymns of the Vedas assert that it is the 'Kālāgni' (literally, the dooms day fire, or the great fire element which is synonymous with death); and it is the entity that has no attributes, that cannot be described or defined, that is invisible and beyond the purview of speech and perception. The world has its origin in it and collapses back into and coalesces with it (7).

मायावी मायया बद्धः करोति विविधास्तनूः। न चाप्ययं संसरति न च संसारयेत्प्रभुः।।8।।

māyāvī māyayā baddhaḥ karoti vividhāstanūḥ /
na cāpyayaṃ saṃsarati na ca saṃsārayetprabhuḥ //

It is the Ātmā that gets tied to the shackles created by the cunning and impostering 'Māyā' (the great powers of nature that create delusions, ignorance and hallucinations) to assume different bodies and forms. In fact, it never moves on its own (i.e. it is steady and stable, it is still and unwavering) and neither can anyone ever make it move (i.e. lose its innate eternal stability, calmness, peaceful demeanours, enlightened and contented nature) (8).

[Note :—The Ātmā is sturdy and firmly rooted in enlightenment. But when it is veiled by the covering of ignorance, it sees the outside world through this sheet-class of ignorance and deception. The vision of the Ātmā gets affected or influenced by the taint of colour present in the sheet inclosing it from all the sides. Its vision or perception of the 'truth' gets influenced by the tainted glass sheet of ignorance and delusions surrounding it or encasing it from all the sides like a case of glass. As a result, it cannot see the 'truth' in its actual, real and untainted form.]

नायं पृथ्वी न सलिलं न तेजः पवनो नभः। न प्राणो न मनो व्यक्तं न शब्दः स्पर्श एव च।।9।।

nāyaṃ pṛthvī na salilaṃ na tejaḥ pavano nabhaḥ /
na prāṇo na mano vyaktaṃ na śabdaḥ sparśa eva ca //

[Now starts the process of negation or elimination to describe the real essence of the Ātmā (soul), a process so typical of the Vedas—'Neti-Neti', i.e. 'neither this nor that'.]

'It' (Ātmā/soul) is not the earth, nor is it the water, the fire, the wind present in the sky, the sky or the space, the Prāṇa (vital wind, breath), and the 'Mana' (the mind). It is none of the things that are seen or observed, are heard of as words, and even felt by touch (9)

न रूपरसगन्धाश्च नाहङ्कर्ता ना वागपि। न पाणिपादौ नो पायुर्न चोपस्थं प्लवङ्गम्।।10।।

na rūparasagandhāśca nāhaṅkarhtā nā vāgapi/
na pāṇipādau no pāyurna copasthaṃ plavaṅgam//

'It' (Ātmā/soul) has neither any shape or form, nor any taste or smell. It has no 'Ahaṅkāra' (ego, pride, haughtiness, arrogance, hypocrisy and a sense of superiority), and neither does it have any speech. Oh Mahāvīra (Hanumāna; literally meaning one who has great strength, powers and valour, one who is most brave and strong)! It has no legs and feet, no anus and no genitals either (10).

न कर्ता न च भोक्ता च न प्रकृतिपुरुषौ। न माया नैव प्राणश्चैतन्यं परमार्थतः।।11।।

na kartā na ca bhoktā ca na prakṛtipuruṣau/
na māyā naiva prāṇaścaitanyaṃ paramārthataḥ//

'It' (Ātmā/soul) is neither a doer of deeds nor someone who enjoys the rewards of those deeds or suffers from its consequences. It is neither Nature (female aspect of creation, Prakṛti), nor is it its male counterpart, the macrocosmic Puruṣa. It is neither 'Māyā' (falsehoods, deceits and delusions as well as ignorance) nor Prāṇa (truthfulness and life). It is a supreme, transcendental, sublime, heavenly Spirit that is pure consciousness personified (11).

तथा प्रकाशतमसोः सम्बन्धोनोपपद्यते। तद्वदेव न सम्बन्धः प्रपञ्चपरमात्मनो।।12।।

tathā prakāśatamasoḥ sambandhonopapadyate/
tadvadeva na sambandhaḥ prapañcaparamātmano//

Even as light and darkness have no relation with each other, the delusions of this creation and the supreme, transcendental and sublime Ātmā have no relationship with each other (12).

छयातरु यथा लोके परस्परविलक्षणौ। तद्वत्प्रपञ्चपुरुषो विभिन्नौ परमार्थतः।।13।।

chāyātaru yathā loke parasparavilakṣaṇau/
tadvatprapañcapuruṣo vibhinnau paramārthataḥ//

Just like a tree and its shadow have a strange and fascinating mutual relationship in this world, the delusions and illusionary aspect of creation, including the 'Puruṣa' aspect, is different from the transcendental, supreme Spirit which is the ultimate Truth (13).

[Note :—A tree casts a shadow; the tree is real while its shadow is not real. But the most important factor is the light of the sun—the sunlight—that makes it possible for the tree to cast its shadow; the shadow is formed because of the sunlight. Without the sun, there would be no sunlight and there would be no shadow. This is an example from the world. Plato had also used it with slight vaiation—he described the shadow on the wall of a cave. In the metaphysical realm, the Brahma is like the sun; his desire to create the cosmos produces the macrocosmic Virāṭ Puruṣa even as the tree was produced on earth in the presence of sunlight and the chemical process of photosynthesis dependent on it. The Puruṣa has an existence like that of the tree, and the dark shadows of delusions of Māyā created by it are akin to the shadows of the tree in this world. The allusion of the tree and the shadow is used to show the relationship between the Ātmā and the creation.]

यद्यात्मा मालिनोऽवस्थौ विकारी स्यात्स्वभावतः। नहि तस्य भवेन्मुक्तिर्जन्मान्तरशतैरपि।।14।।
yadyātmā mālino'vasthau vikārī syātsvabhāvataḥ /
nahi tasya bhavenmuktirjanmāntaraśatairapi //

That Ātmā (here referring to the soul of the individual creature) which is veiled or over shadowed by darkness of ignorance and delusions, and which has faults, flaws and shortcoming by nature or habit—such an Ātmā of an individual can never find liberation and emancipation, called Mukti, from the horrors of this world in a hundred years (14).

पश्यन्ति मुनयो मुक्ताः स्वात्मानं परमार्थतः। विकारहीनं निर्दुःखमानन्दात्मानमव्ययम्।।15।।
paśyanti munayo muktāḥ svātmānaṃ paramārthataḥ /
vikārahīnaṃ nirduḥkhamānandātmānamavyayayam //

Pious and holy sages, saints, seers, hermits and acetics see or perceive their Ātmā as spiritually elevated and liberated, faultless and immaculate, without any sorrows, anguish and torments, blissful and happy as well as an imperishable, eternal and infinite entity (15).

अहं कर्ता सुखी दुःखी कृशः स्थूलेति या मतिः। साप्यहंकृतिसम्बन्धादात्मन्यारोप्यते जनैः।।16।।
ahaṃ kartā sukhī duḥkhī kṛśaḥ sthūleti yā matiḥ /
sāpyahaṃkṛtisambandhādātmanyāropyate janaiḥ //

'I am a doer, I am happy or sorrowful, I have a well-fed and robust body or an emaciated and decrepit body'—this is a misconception about the Ātmā that a man has due to the influence of Ahaṅkāra (i.e. the delusionary effects caused by ignorance upon his intellect and mind). [That is, a person falsely accuses the Ātmā as having these characteristic due to the delusion created out of the ignorance about the truthful and real nature of the Ātmā. The creature forgets that his Ātmā is not the body which he erroneously identifies as his true identity.] (16).

[Note :—A creature is filled with pride when he thinks that he has done such and such deeds. Since he is the 'doer', he has to suffer or enjoy the bad or good results of a deed done by him even as a person is punished for any crime only if he is involved in it, directly or indirectly. With joy and happiness, his body shows signs of wellbeing, and in sorrows it becomes emaciated. But all this chain reaction is due to one basic fault of perception—the thought that 'I have done such and such thing'. See note to verse no. 17 below also.]

वदन्ति वेद विद्वान्सः साक्षिणं प्रकृते परम्। भोक्तारमक्षयं बुद्ध्वा सर्वत्र समवस्थितम्।।17।।

vadanti veda vidvānsaḥ sākṣiṇaṃ prakṛte param/
bhoktāramakṣayaṃ buddhvā sarvatra samavasthitam//

Those who are expert in the knowledge contained in the Vedas call it (Ātmā/soul) 'a witness' to whatever is happening around it, and is beyond the purview of 'Prakṛti' (or nature of a creature which means its habits, temperaments, natural inclination as well as the delusions and ignorance created by this world). They regard it (the Ātmā) as the entity for which all efforts in the world are made. It is imperishable as well as universally and uniformally omnipresent and all-pervading everywhere (17).

[Note :—(i) Verse no. 11 says that Ātmā is not a 'doer of deeds', and verse no. 16 says that the belief that 'I am the doer' is a fallacious conception about the Ātmā. It is wrong to accuse the Ātmā as the doer of deeds. Then, if it's not the doer, what is it then? The answer is—'it is a witness', verse no. 17. It does not participate nor gets emotionally involved in anything that is happening around it. Naturally therefore, it neither feels happy nor sorry at the results, good or bad. Again, since it is neutral and steady, it transcends any 'habits and tendencies' inherent to a creature. For example, a creature 'naturally' seeks happiness and veers away from sorrows; it is a natural, inborn habit of any creature. But the pure Ātmā/soul neither does seek happiness nor does it fear from sorrows.

(ii) By saying it is 'a Bhoktā' or the entity for which all efforts are made and which enjoys the rewards of those efforts, it is meant that the Ātmā silently, passively, without resistance, accepts what is offered to it. This is because it sees no distinction between any two given circumstances—e.g. hunger and being well-fed mean the same thing to it, simply because it is never hungry nor desires to eat anything.

(iii) 'Prakṛti' has two connotation as described in bracket in the above verse. See also Canto 12, verse no. 11 in this connection.]

तस्मादज्ञान मूलोऽयं संसारः सर्व देहि नाम्। अज्ञानादन्यथा ज्ञातं तच्च प्रकृतिसङ्गतम्।।18।।

tasmādajñāna mūlo'yaṃ saṃsāraḥ sarva dehi nām /
ajñānādanyathā jñātaṃ tacca prakṛtisaṅgatam //

It is the lack of truthful knowledge about 'it' (Ātmā/soul) that creates the illusion that this physical world is at the root or basic cause and the basis of all the creatures of the creation having a physical body with a name. The knowledge that is the opposite of this ignorance-based 'lack of knowledge', pertains to the macrocosmic Nature or Prakṛti (18).

नित्योदितः स्वयंज्योतिः सर्वगः पुरुषः परः। अहङ्कारोविवेकेन कर्ताहमिति मन्यते।।19।।

nityoditaḥ svayaṃjyotiḥ sarvagaḥ puruṣaḥ paraḥ /
ahaṅkārovivekena kartāhamiti manyate //

That divine 'Puruṣa' is supreme, transcendental and sublime, is eternally risen (i.e. he never sets or never comes to an end, or is perpetually enlightened and wise), is self illuminated, and is able to reach the most inaccessible of places (i.e. he can go everywhere because he is immanent and omnipresent). Such a magnificent Being, when Ahaṅkāra casts its delusionary and dark shadow upon him, becomes ignorant of his true, glorious identity. In the absence of this awareness and wisdom, he begins to think that he is a 'doer of deeds' (and subsequently gets bogged down in the chain of events set rolling by this single misconception) (19).

पश्यन्ति ऋषयो व्यक्तं नित्यं सदसदात्मकम्। प्रधानं प्रकृतिं बुद्ध्वा कारणं ब्रह्मवादिनः।।20।।

paśyanti ṛṣayo vyaktaṃ nityaṃ sadasadātmakam /
pradhānaṃ prakṛtiṃ buddhvā kāraṇaṃ brahmavādinaḥ //

Wise sages and seers 'evidently and manifestly see' that eternal, universal, truthful, all-pervading, omnipresent pure consciousness in its true form. [That is, they realise that the whole physical world they see with their eyes is a manifested form, a revelation of that Supreme Being called 'Puruṣa'. The world is an evidence of the glorious, magnificent and marvelous Puruṣa (Being) even as an image in a mirror is an irrefutable proof of the primary object that forms its image in the mirror.] Those erudite, sagacious and wise persons who are well-versed in the knowledge of Brahma realise that it is the basic and primary cause of creation of Prakṛti ('Nature' as the crucible of the creation, as well as the 'nature' as defined by the words habits, temperaments, inherent tendencies and inclination of a creature). This knowledge, this enlightenment, this erudition and this awareness makes them experts on Brahma (20).

तेनात्र सङ्गतो ह्यात्मा कूटस्थोऽपि निरञ्जनः। आत्मानमक्षरं ब्रह्म नावबुद्ध्यन्ति तत्त्वतः॥21॥

tenātra saṅgato hyātmā kūṭastho'pi nirañjanaḥ/
ātmānamakṣaraṃ brahma nāvabuddhyanti tattvataḥ//

When that subtle, transcendental, secret, exalted, supreme, eternal, steady, immutable and imperishable 'Kutastha Puruṣa', who is faultless, without blemishes and shortcomings, is infinite and measureless, is immaculate and pure, is invisible and subtle, and is divine and holy (collectively called Nirañjana), becomes veiled in ignorance about the essential truth of his Ātmā, he forgets or does not realise that his truthful Ātmā is the 'Akṣara Brahma', which literally means an 'imperishable' Brahma, or the supreme 'word' that is a representative of Brahma (21).

अनात्मन्यात्मविज्ञानं तस्माद्दुःखं तथेतरत्। रागद्वेषादयो दोषाः सर्वभ्रान्तिनिबन्धनाः॥22॥

anātmanyātmavijñānaṃ tasmādduḥkhaṃ tathetarat/
rāgadveṣādayo doṣāḥ sarvabhrāntinibandhanāḥ//

He misconceives that the Ātmā is present even in those entities that are 'non-Ātmā'. [That is, he mistakenly believes that what is false, illusionary and artificial, viz. the mundane world, as we see it, is true. He forgets that the Ātmā is the only truthful entity; the rest are all non-Ātmās or falsehoods.] This misconception leads to sorrows and anguish, restlessness and torments. 'Rāga and Dveṣa' (attachments and hatreds, endearments and ill-wills) are faults and evils that have their existence or are present only due to misconception about the Ātmā. [That Ātmā is the same in all the creatures—it is the same in an enemy as well as in a friend. It is also indistinguishable from the Ātmā of the person who looks at others as his enemy or a friend.] Hence, to have endearments towards one person and hate another is a fallacy created by the influence of delusions, ignorance and misconception about the Ātmā (22).

कार्ये ह्यस्य भवेदेषा पुण्यापुण्यमिति श्रुतिः। तद्वशादेव सर्वेषां सर्वदेहसमुद्भवः।।23।।

kārye hyasya bhavedeṣā puṇyāpuṇyamiti śrutiḥ/
tadvaśādeva sarveṣāṃ sarvadehasamudbhavaḥ//

The Vedas affirm that righteousness and unrighteousness is determined by whether the deeds are good or bad, noble or ignoble, worthy or unworthy, honourable or dishonourable, graceful or disgraceful. All the creatures that have a body are bound by their deeds which determine which new body they will get upon rebirth as a composite effect of all the deeds done by them in the present life (23).

नित्य सर्वत्रगो ह्यात्मा कूटस्थो दोषवर्जितः। एकः स भिद्यते शक्त्या मायया न स्वभावतः।।24।।

nitya sarvatrago hyātmā kūṭastho doṣavarjitaḥ/
ekaḥ sa bhidyate śaktyā māyayā na svabhāvataḥ//

The Ātmā/soul is an eternal, infinite and universal entity that is all pervading, immanent, omnipresent and all-encompassing. That entity which is subline, transcendental, esoteric, exalted, supreme, eternal, steady, immutable and imperishable (Kutastha—see also verse no. 21) as well as the only one of its kind, unique and unparalleled, appears to have myriad different forms and shapes. This is due to the faults and flaws in conception and perception created by Māyā (the delusions and ignorance about the absolute Truth) (24).

[Note :—The Ātmā is the invisible atom like microscopic power house which is the same in all the creatures. It is also the basic unit of the supreme Puruṣa or Being who is the macrocosmic, all-encompassing and all-representing form of creation. This is a basic and fundamental truth. But ignorance of this truth creates a canvas having so many different colours, shades and hues of the pictures known as a colourfully variable creation or cosmos. To illustrate the point, we take the help of a 'water molecule' consisting of two atoms of hydrogen (H_2) and one atom of oxygen (O_2) bonding together to form the basic ingredient of creation known as water. But those who do not know the basic and universal truth about water, give hundreds of names to it—such as, water of a well, a pond, a river, and ocean or sea etc. water which is cold, hot, warm etc. water which is potable and not potable, water which is hard and soft, heavy and light, clean, turbid or polluted, crystal clear and slimy, water having different colours—emerald green, crystal blue, blood red and golden yellow, water that is torpid and sluggish of a shallow rivulet or a cascading, bubbling, gushing, foaming and frothing water of a waterfall, water as moisture, as vapour, as steam, as rain, as snow, as hail, as ice, as mist or as dew. On the contrary, a wise and enlightened person will see nothing else but two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen in the element simply known as water.]

तस्मादद्वैतमेवाहुर्मुनयः परमार्थतः। भेदोऽव्यक्तस्वभावेन सा च मायात्मसंश्रया।।25।।

tasmādadvaitamevāhurmunayaḥ paramārthataḥ /
bhedo'vyaktasvabhāvena sā ca māyātmasaṃśrayā //

That is why wise sages and seers call that subtle and universal Truth as non-dual or Advaitya. To treat that entity that is by nature beyond comprehension, subtle, indescribable, non-dual, sublime, supreme and trancendental as having a 'dual existence' (or, distinguishing between the visible aspect of creation and the non-visible Ātmā pervading throughout it, to segregate and classify the creatures into imaginary categories, to have the notion of you and me, Ātmā and Puruṣa, Puruṣa and Nature, animate and inanimate world, friend and foe, male and female, young and old, man and animal, low and high etc.) is known as Māyā (delusion and ignorance associated with this world and the Ātmā) (25).

यथाहि धूमसम्पर्कान्नाकाशो मलिनो भवेत्। अन्तःकरणजैर्भावैरात्मा तद्वन्नलिप्यते।।26।।

yathāhi dhūmasamparkānnākāśo malino bhavet /
antaḥkaraṇajairbhāvairātmā tadvannalipyate //

Even as a contact with smoke appears to make the sky look hazy and unclear (but it is not actually hazy and unclear, because it is not at all affected whether or not smoke is present in it), the Ātmā also does not get affected by the notions, inherent tendencies and natural inclinations present as an innate, integral nature of a creature (26).

[Note :—The innate nature and behaviour of a creature are determined by different Vāsanās or Vṛttis, or the worldly passions and inherent tendencies that it has. The Ātmā is unblemished and untainted by these notions, but is nevertheless blamed or accused of the consequences because it is the de-facto Lord or Master of creation and its faults. It cannot absolve itself of its responsibilities from these consequences. But this situation arises only when the creature thinks, though erroneously and fallaciously, that it is the 'doer' of any deed. This thought is provoked in it due to its ignorance about the immaculate nature of its pure self, which is the Ātmā. As soon as this wisdom sprouts in its bosom, the creature gets instant freedom from being affected by the different delusionary notions simply because it treats itself as the uncorrupt and non-dual Ātmā, which is merely a witness and an observer of all that transpires around it in this world, instead of treating his body, which does the deeds, as his true self and getting unnecessarily involved in the deeds. See also verse nos. 11, 12, 17 and 18 in this context.]

यथा स्व प्रभया भाति केवलः स्फटिकोपलः। उपाधिहीनो विमलस्तथैवात्मा प्रकाशते।।27।।

yathā sva prabhayā bhāti kevalaḥ sphaṭikopalaḥ /
upādhihīno vimalastathaivātmā prakāśate //

Even as a piece of polished crystal or quartz appears bright, radiant and bedazzled with illumination, this untainted, uncorrupt and pristine pure Ātmā, which has no attributes of its own, also appears to be self illuminated (27).

[Note :—Pure crystal has no light of its own but it reflects the light falling on it. Similarly, the Ātmā/soul reflects the glory of Brahma as it is reflected form it. The various tendencies, inclinations, habits, passion etc. of a creature cast a shadow upon the Ātmā, and for an observer the Ātmā appears to posses these qualities because though they reflect from its surface but appear to come from within it even as the crystal appear to be variously coloured under the effects of different shades of light falling on it but stupid people say that the 'crystal has the colour'. See verse no. 30 below.]

ज्ञानस्वरूपमेवाहुर्जगदेतद्विचक्षणाः। अर्थस्वरूपमेवाज्ञाः पश्यन्त्यन्ये कुबुद्धयः।।28।।

jñānasvarūpamevāhurjagadetadvicakṣaṇāḥ /
arthasvarūpamevājñāḥ paśyantyanye kubuddhayaḥ //

Erudite, wise, sagacious and enlightened ones who have the eyes of wisdom and deep insight, intelligence and discriminatory powers, perceive this external façade of the world with their eyes of wisdom and with the perspective of 'Jñāna' (truthful knowledge of essential truth), while those who have corrupted, pervert, evil and ignorant minds look at it or perceive it with a materialistic view point, with a materialist perspective of cause and effect, meaning and logic, benefits and losses etc. (28).

कूटस्थो निर्गुणो व्यापी चैतन्यात्मा स्वभावतः। दृश्यते ह्यर्थरूपेण पुरुषैर्भ्रान्तदृष्टिभिः ।।29।।

kūṭastho nirguṇo vyāpī caitanyātmā svabhāvataḥ /
dṛśyate hyartharūpeṇa puruṣairbhrāntadṛṣṭibhiḥ //

The Ātmā—which has the epithets such as 'Kūṭastha' (i.e. being sublime, transcendental, exalted, supreme, eternal, steady, immutable and imperishable), 'Nirguṇa' (i.e. without any qualities, virtues, attributes and characteristics, either good or bad) and 'Vyāpī' (i.e. all pervading, omnipresent, immanent and all encompassing)—is in fact, by nature, pure and unadulterated consciousness. But those with a defective vision and deluded by ignorance see or perceive it with the same materialistic objective view point with which they try to judge the rest of the world (29).

यथा संलक्ष्यते व्यक्तः केवलः स्फटिको जनैः। रक्तिकाव्यवधानेन तद्वत्परम पूरुषः ।।30।।

yathā saṃlakṣyate vyaktaḥ kevalaḥ sphaṭiko janaiḥ /
raktikāvyavadhānena tadvatparama pūruṣaḥ //

Just like a pure piece of crystal appears red-tinged to people when red light falls on it (in other words, the colourless crystal appears red coloured due to the influence of the red light covering it like a translucent envelop), the supreme, transcendental Puruṣa (Supreme Being who is the macrocosmic form of the Ātmā) similarly appears to have so many attributes when he is incased in a body. [Or, in other words, when that supreme Puruṣa covers himself with a sheath known as the gross and physical body having so many characteristic features, he begins to show as many characteristics as are present in that covering, the body] (30).

[Note :—The Ātmā, whether of the individual at the micro-level or the cosmos at the macro-level, is subtle, invisible, attributeless and all pervading. It is pure and uncorrupt like the crystal. It has no virtues of its own other than purity and non-corruption. But when this Ātmā assumes and incases itself with a gross covering which has certain definable features—such as having a well defined organs, having a complexion and physical features, doing different deeds, being visible and can be touched and felt, the Ātmā appears to have acquired all these features in it. For an observer, that Ātmā now appears to be recognizable by virtue of those features; he observes a man and a woman, a child and an old man, a man and an animal, a lion and a dog, and not the entity known as Ātmā which is the same in the whole creation; the Ātmā actually does not do anything, it does not have any features, it does not have any organs or complexion.]

तस्मादात्माक्षरः शुद्धो नित्यः सर्वगतोऽव्ययः। उपासितव्यो मन्तव्यः श्रोतव्यश्च मुमुक्षुभिः ।।31।।

tasmādātmākṣaraḥ śuddho nityaḥ sarvagato'vyayaḥ /
upāsitavyo mantavyaḥ śrotavyaśca mumukṣubhiḥ //

That is why the truthful entity known as Ātmā is adorable and worthy of worship, glorification and honour. It is imperishable, pure, eternal, all pervading and without an end. That is why it is also worthy of contemplation and mediation, thinking about and pondering deeply on. That is why those who desire liberation and deliverance from the fetters that shackle them to this illusionary and artificial world, who seek emancipation and salvation, should hear and learn about it (instead of wasting their time on fruitless pursuits, chatter, gossip and endless debates and discourses) (31).

यदा मनसि चैतन्यं भाति सर्वत्रगं सदा। योगिनोऽव्यवधानेन तदा सम्पद्यते स्वयम्।।32।।

yadā manasi caitanyaṃ bhāti sarvatragaṃ sadā /
yogino'vyavadhānena tadā sampadyate svayam //

At the time all-pervading, omnipresent and all-encompassing pure consciousness makes its appearance felt inside the heart (Mana) of a Yogī (i.e. when an ascetic becomes aware of the presence of the Ātmā inside his own heart), he becomes free from all the hurdles, distractions, confusions and doubts, and consequentially is successful in establishing contact with that conscious factor (32).

यदा सर्वाणि भूतानि स्वात्मन्येवाभि पश्यति। सर्वभूतेषु चात्मानं ब्रह्म सम्पद्यते स्वयम्।।33।।

yadā sarvāṇi bhūtāni svātmanyevābhi paśyati /
sarvabhūteṣu cātmānaṃ brahma sampadyate svayam //

[Verse nos. 33 and 34 are one of the great sayings of the scriptures and one of the pedestals of enlightenment. They present the non-dual view of creation.]

A person who sees all the creatures or Bhūtas of the creation in his own Ātmā, and at the same time, sees himself or his own Ātmā as being present or residing in the bosom of all those creatures—only such a person is eligible, competent and worthy, and he is the one who has the required aptitude and caliber, to attain Brahmā (33).

[Note :—(i) This is the non-dual approach of Vedānta. A person who is wisened of the elementary and fundamental basis of Vedāntic tenets knows that the worthwhile primary factor which is universally present in all the creatures in this creation is the Ātmā/soul. This Ātmā/soul is synonymous with pure conscious and transcendental Brahma. So, when he interacts with anyone, he does not interact with anyone who is different from himself, or he does not treat the other creature as 'another' one as such; he believes he is interacting with Brahma in the form of the Ātmā residing in that creature, and the creature's Ātmā is the same as his own. The attainment of Brahma becomes such an easy task for him, so to say, because his each interaction with this world makes him interact with Brahma. For example, when he talks with his friend, he is not talking with a human being, but with Brahma.

(ii) The word 'Bhūta' refers to the five elementary and subtle elements that constitute this gross physical world as we see it. These elements are the following—space/sky, air/wind, water, fire or energy/Teja and earth. They are like the building blocks of creation.

यदा सर्वाणि भूतानि स्वात्मन्येव न पश्यति। एकीभूतः परेणासौ तदा भवति केवलः ।।34।।

yadā sarvāṇi bhūtāni svātmanyeva na paśyati/
ekībhūtaḥ pareṇāsau tadā bhavati kevalaḥ//

When he has become wise and enlightened enough to see all the creatures or Bhūtas of this creation in his own self, i.e. sees them as being indistinguishable from himself, then such a person becomes one and inseparable from those Bhūtas. As a consequence, he finds oneness with the supreme and universal Brahma (34).

यदा सर्वे प्रमुच्यन्ते कामा येऽस्य हृदि स्थिताः। तदासावमृतीभूत क्षेमं गच्छति पण्डितः ।।35।।

yadā sarve pramucyante kāmā ye'sya hṛdi sthitāḥ/
tadāsāvamṛtībhūta kṣemaṃ gacchati paṇḍitaḥ//

When all the desires of the heart cease, or they are exhausted and annihilated, then that wise one becomes blissful and contented as if he has drunk the ambrosia called 'Amṛta' which is primarily concerned with providing welfare and happiness to all the creatures or Bhūtas of this creation (35).

[Note :—'Desires' are at the root of all discontent and unhappiness because a man spends his whole life in trying to satisfy them, but is unable to do it completely. Even if he does succeed in satisfying all the current desires, newer ones go on cropping up every now and then in the future. So, when the desires are annihilated or burnt or removed or eliminated or vanquished, then there will be nothing to trouble the creature anymore again. There will be no such situation as 'unfulfilled desires' leading to endless and perpetual restlessness and agitations. The result is 'Amṛta-like' peace, tranquility and bliss.

यदा भूतपृथग्भावमेकस्थमनुपश्यति। तत एव च विस्तारं ब्रह्म सम्पद्यते तदा।।36।।

yadā bhūtapṛthagbhāvamekasthamanupaśyati /
tata eva ca vistāraṃ brahma sampadyate tadā //

When that 'Paṇḍit' (see verse no. 35), i.e. a person who is wise, expert, erudite, sagacious and learned, sees or perceives all the separate and multifaceted parts or the innumerable myriad forms that those individual elements of creation called Bhūtas have taken at a single plane (i.e. when he ceases to see or perceive differences in a creatures and their elementary forms, the different Bhūtas, then all the differences, schisms and variations lose their significance and importance). Everything boils down to one single element, or one single point, from where or which they have all emerged or sprang up or sprouted to create an illusion of divergence and multifacetedness in the form of this myriad variation of the creation. Such wisdom enables that person to have a wide and broad perspective of Brahma as the one who incorporates in itself the vast, multifaceted, innumerable variations of Bhūtas, in their various permutations and combinations, that constitute this world (36).

यदा पश्यति चात्मायं केवलं परमार्थतः। मायामात्रं जगत्कृत्स्नं तदा भवति निर्वृतः।।37।।

yadā paśyati cātmāyaṃ kevalaṃ paramārthataḥ /
māyāmātraṃ jagatkṛtsnaṃ tadā bhavati nirvṛtaḥ //

When he is spiritually elevated and enlightened enough to perceive or realise his true self as only 'one', i.e. as the non-dual Ātmā, and sees the external, artificial and mundane world as nothing else but delusions created by ignorance (Māyā), then he is deemed to be liberated and emancipated, or become a 'Nivṛta' (i.e., person who has finished his burdensome task and become free form obligations) (37).

यदा जन्मजरादुःखव्याधीनामेकभेषजम्। केवलं ब्रह्मविज्ञानं जायतेऽसौ तदा शिवः।।38।।

yadā janmajarāduḥkhavyādhīnāmekabheṣajam /
kevalaṃ brahmavijñānaṃ jāyate'sau tadā śivaḥ //

When he finds that supreme enlightenment of Brahmā as the only remedy to eliminate the numerous miseries, torments and anguish caused by birth, old age and death, it is only then that he is deemed to be like 'Śiva'—he becomes wise, enlightened, renunciate, auspicious, contented, peaceful and blissful (38).

यथा नदी नदा लोके सागरेणकतां ययुः। तद्वदात्माक्षरेणासौ निष्कलेनैकतां व्रजेत्।।39।।

yathā nadī nadā loke sāgareṇakatāṃ yayuḥ/
tadvadātmākṣareṇāsau niṣkalenaikatāṃ vrajet//

Even as rivers and their tributaries in the world go and fall into the ocean to become one with and inseparable and indistinguishable from it, this faultless Ātmā too merges with the imperishable 'one' (i.e. Brahma) to become inseparable and indistinguishable from it (39).

तस्माद्विज्ञानमेवास्ति न प्रपञ्चो न संस्थितिः। अज्ञानेनावृतं लोके विज्ञानं तेन मुह्यति।।40।।

tasmādvijñānamevāsti na prapañco na saṃsthitiḥ/
ajñānenāvṛtaṃ loke vijñānaṃ tena muhyati//

Such deceptive knowledge about the Ātmā vis-à-vis the world is the cause of creating all illusions of reality about the latter which is, in fact, artificial, unreal and delusionary in nature and not the actual truth and reality as it appears to be. A creature is shrouded in a veil of ignorance and deception and thinks that what he sees and observes and what he deduces from the sight and from what he observes in this world is a well-concerned, properly weighed, thoughtful, wise and empirical conclusion or deduction based on wisdom and knowledge (whereas in fact, it is not !) (40).

[Note :—The Ātmā is surrounded by a veil or shroud of ignorance which is like a plastic or glass transparent sheet, wrapping it from all the sides. No matter how clear and transparent that sheet might be, but it is not the same as the option of seeing and observing the truth and reality of the world direct without the intervening medium of the sheet representing ignorance and deception. So, any hint, any tinge of colour in this surrounding sheet of plastic or glass covering will make the Ātmā see the outside world with that particular tinge or shade of colour that appears in the surrounding sheet. Since it has no other way to determine the truth —other than removing the surrounding plastic or glass sheet itself—the Ātmā begins to think that the tinged world really, indeed, has that colour; i.e. the tinge is for real. But, as we see, this colour is misleading and an incorrect interpretation of fact, because it is not actually the colour of the world but is due to the presence of a tinged intervening sheet of glass or plastic.

This is what is meant in this verse. The creature 'thinks' that it is seeing or viewing or observing this world with the eyesight of wisdom and erudition, but it is being mislead by this 'tinged or corrupted' biased mental vision of the actual truth and reality by the presence of ignorance and delusion caused by Ajñāna, or lack of truthful knowledge. In brief, what apparently appears to be the truth and the real fact is in fact not so; it is a 'tainted, corrupted, biased and untruthful' perception and view of the real Reality and truthful Truth!]

तज्ज्ञानं निर्मलं सूक्ष्मं निर्विकल्पं यदव्ययम्। अज्ञानमिति तत्सर्वं विज्ञानमिति मे मतम्।।41।।

tajjñānaṃ nirmalaṃ sūkṣmaṃ nirvikalpaṃ yadavyayam /
ajñānamiti tatsarvaṃ vijñānamiti me matam //

That entity (the Ātmā) is pristine pure, most subtle and sublime, one of its kind and without an alternative, and it is imperishable and immortal. It is out of delusion inspired ignorance that it appears to have so many forms with so many illusionary characteristics and definations. According to me (Śrī Rāma), this awareness itself is called 'Vijñāna' (or the truthful awareness of the Reality, the truthful Truth that is irrefutable, immutable, empirical and arrived at by rational logic, experimentation, discussion and rigorous test as to its veracity) (41).

एतत्ते परमं सांख्यं भावितं ज्ञानमुत्तमम्। सर्ववेदान्तसारं हि योगस्तत्रैक चित्तता।।42।।

etatte paramaṃ sāṃkhyaṃ bhāvitaṃ jñānamuttamam /
sarvavedāntasāraṃ hi yogastatraika cittatā //

This is the supreme knowledge postulated and elucidated by the Indian school of philosophy called 'Sāṅkhya Śāstra' which is an excellent exposition and elucidation on the essence of Vedānta. This is also the aim of Yoga (contemplation and meditation)—to inculcate concentration of mind upon the Pure Consciousness (42).

[Note :—The concept of Sāṅkhya and Sāṅkhya Śāstra is one of the six great schools of Indian philosophy. It was first propounded by sage Kapila. It has been described in detail in note to verse no. 118 of canto no. 25 of this book.

(ii) The word 'Vedānta' means literally 'the end of the Vedas' and they are also called the Upaniṣads. The different tenets, axioms and maxims contained in the canons of the Vedas were explained by ancient sages and seers to their disciples, and their teachings were compiled to form the Upaniṣads. These texts were generally appended at the end of a particular section of the Veda to explain the relevant part of the Veda. The one single thread which is common to all the Upaniṣads is the non-dual nature of Ātmā and Brahma, their interrelationships, and the relationship between them and the rest of the creation. The philosophy of the Upaniṣads and Sāṅkhya are very much alike. Whereas this Canto 11 deals primarily with the Sāṅkhya philosophy, the next Canto no. 12 deals with the Upaniṣadic philosophy and the reader will find a striking similarity between them.]

योगात्सञ्जायते ज्ञानं ज्ञानाद्योगः प्रजायते। योगज्ञानाभियुक्तस्य नावाप्यं विद्यते क्वचित्।।43।।

yogātsañjāyate jñānaṃ jñānādyogaḥ prajāyate /
yogajñānābhiyuktasya nāvāpyaṃ vidyate kvacit //

Yoga (contemplation and meditation, concentration of mind and attention) helps in acquiring Jñāna (wisdom, erudition and knowledge). With Jñāna, Yoga is bolstered and intensified. A person who is blessed with a combination of both Jñāna and Yoga, nothing remains impossible for him (43).

[Note :—To learn anything, concentration of mind and diligent efforts by the body are very essential. Again, when one starts acquiring knowledge by the study of the scriptures (or for that matter, any body of knowledge, whether it be science, art, commerce, philosophy, management etc.), his 'awareness of the truth' is gradually enhanced. His thought processes under go change and he starts to focus more and more on the subject of his study. For example, the study of the scriptures tells him about the futility of worldly pursuits; a person who becomes aware of this knowledge about the futility of pursuing worldly objects stops pursuing them, resulting in him becoming peaceful, tranquil and serene. Hence, a person who has both knowledge as well as control over his mind and body, who has 'Jñāna' as well as 'Yoga', can achieve success in anything he does.

यदेव योगिनो यान्ति सांख्यं तदभिगम्यते। एकं सांख्यं च योगं च यः पश्यति स तत्त्ववित्।।44।।

yadeva yogino yānti sāṃkhyaṃ tadabhigamyate /
ekaṃ sāṃkhyaṃ ca yogaṃ ca yaḥ paśyati sa tattvavit //

Both the philosophies of Sāṅkhya and Yoga walk the same path (i.e. they stress the same principles, prescribe the same tenets and give the same advice to their followers). A person who sees uniformity and oneness in the teachings of Yoga and Sāṅkhya philosophies is indeed an expert in the essentials of Reality and Truth (44).

अन्ये च योगिनो वत्स ऐश्वर्यासक्तचेतसः। मज्जन्ति तत्र तत्रैव सत्त्वात्मैक्यमिति श्रुतिः।।45।।
anye ca yogino vatsa aiśvaryāsaktacetasaḥ /
majjanti tatra tatraiva sattvātmaikyamiti śrutiḥ //

Oh son (Hanumāna)! Those Yogīs (ascetics) who yearn for wealth, fame, fortune, supremacy, glory, grandeur, power and pelf get tied down to them or get entangled in their web and bogged down in their pursuit. These are not the 'truths'. The basic truth is the conscious, pure and truthful Ātmā—this is the axiomatic tenet of the Vedas (45).

यत्तत्सर्वगतं दिव्यमैश्वर्यमचलं महत्। ज्ञानयोगाभियुक्तस्तु देहान्ते तदवाप्नुयात्।।46।।
yattatsarvagataṃ divyamaiśvaryamacalaṃ mahat /
jñānayogābhiyuktastu dehānte tadavāpnuyāt //

That entity (Ātmā/soul) is omnipresent, all-pervading and all-encompassing; is divine and glorious, is great and stupendous, and is majestic, magnificent and profound. It is steady, unwavering, unmoving and everlasting. Such a majestic and grand Ātmā is attained by simultaneously following the path of Jñāna (acquisition of truthful knowledge by the help of the wisdom, discrimination and enlightenment) as well as Yoga (contemplation, meditation, deep thought and concentration of mind). By doing so, a creature successfully reaches its goal (which is the supreme Ātmā, the Brahma) at the time of its death (46).

एष आत्माहमव्यक्तो मायावी परमेश्वरः। कीर्तितः सर्ववेदेषु सर्वात्मा सर्वतोमुखः।।47।।
eṣa ātmāhamavyakto māyāvī parameśvaraḥ /
kīrtitaḥ sarvavedeṣu sarvātmā sarvatomukhaḥ //

I am that attributeless, unmanifest, indefinable, invisible and maverick Supreme Soul/Ātmā called Parmeśvara (literally meaning the supreme Lord). I am the entity called the all-pervading, omnipresent and immanent Ātmā that is famous in all the Vedas and which is endowed with all-round virtues (such as being omniscient, all-knowing, well versed in everything and every knowledge). I am the face of and the mouth for the whole creation and the creatures that inhabit it (47).

[Note :—The last word Sarvatomukha also literally means that 'I am the mouth of all', or 'I reside in the mouth of all', or 'I am the face of all the creatures'. It means, that the Ātmā lives in all the creatures which are born, which eat and speak, which have a body and a physical form.]

सर्वकामः सर्वरसः सर्वगन्धोऽजरोमरः। सर्वतः पाणिपादोऽहमन्तर्यामी सनातनः।।48।।

sarvakāmaḥ sarvarasaḥ sarvagandho'jaromaraḥ/
sarvataḥ pāṇipādo'hamantaryāmī sanātanaḥ//

I (the Ātmā) am an embodiment of all contentedness and fulfillments (i.e. I am fully satisfied and have no desires left in me; I don't want anything because I lack nothing). I represent the sap or juice or essence having all the flavour or extract of every known virtue that exist. Similarly, all the 'smells' (i.e. the various characteristics, virtues and qualities emanating their specific signature fragrances which identify their special features; the property of suggesting or intimating the presence of special virtues, good or bad) are present in me. I am immune to old age and its attendant degenerative diseases affecting the body; I am also eternal and immortal. I am present everywhere, because I am omnipresent. I have innumerable hands and legs (because the limbs of all the creatures are but my limbs). I reside inside all the creatures and know about their inner thoughts and feelings. I am truthful, universal and eternal (48).

अपाणिपादो जवनो गृहीतो हृदि संस्थितः। अचक्षुरपि पश्यामि तथाऽकर्णः शृणोम्यहम्।।49।।

apāṇipādo javano gṛhīto hṛdi saṃsthitaḥ/
acakṣurapi paśyāmi tathā'karṇaḥ śṛṇomyaham//

I (the Ātmā) do not have any gross, physical hand or leg, yet I am active, swift and agile. I accept everything and live in the heart of the creature. I see without having a gross, physical eye; I hear without having a gross, physical ear (49).

वेदाहं सर्वमेवेदं न मां जानाति कश्चन। प्राहुर्महान्तं पुरुषं मामेकं तत्त्वदर्शिनः।।50।।

vedāhaṃ sarvamevedaṃ na māṃ jānāti kaścana/
prāhurmahāntaṃ puruṣaṃ māmekaṃ tattvadarśinaḥ//

I (the Ātmā) know everyone and everything (because I am omniscient and all-knowing, omnipresent and immanent) but none of them know and understands me. Those who are expert in the fundamentals of the supreme, subtle and truthful knowledge about the absolute reality know that I am only 'one', and they recognise me as the supreme, glorious, majestic Puruṣa (or the great, eclectic, supreme Lord of the creation) (50).

निर्गुणामलरूपस्य य तदेश्वर्यमुत्तमम्। यन्न देवा विजानन्ति मोहिता मायया मम्।।51।।
nirguṇāmalarūpasya ya tadeśvaryamuttamam /
yanna devā vijānanti mohitā māyayā mam //

My excellent, supreme, divine, glorious, majestic and stupendous form that is subtle, without any attributes, pristine pure, untainted, uncorrupted, faultless and flawless is not even known to the divine celestial Gods because they are under the spell of my magical wand which has created a veil of ignorance and delusion around them (preventing them to realise and see the truth) (51).

यन्मे गुह्यतमं देहं सर्वगं तत्त्वदर्शिनः। प्रविष्ठा मम सायुज्यं लभन्ते योगिनोऽव्ययम्।।52।।
yanme guhyatamaṃ dehaṃ sarvagaṃ tattvadarśinaḥ /
praviṣṭhā mama sāyujyaṃ labhante yogino'vyayam //

The most esoteric, atomic, subtle, strange and secret body of mine, which is all-pervading, omnipresent and all encompassing, is accessible to only the wise ones who are aware of the fundamentals of the supreme, subtle and truthful knowledge about the absolute reality known as Ātmā or Brahma. This knowledge empowers them to merge themselves in me (to remove the false sense of duality, of segregation and separation from me, and having an independent identity or existence that is different from me). Consequentially, they become one with me. That is, such Yogīs (ascetics) become imperishable, eternal and infinite like me (because they have dissolved their independent identities with me, and I posses these qualities) (52).

[Note :—The overriding condition and the essential qualification for an ascetic to become one with the supreme Lord is marked by one single word 'Tattvadarśana'. That is, only those who have a deep, penetrating insight about the essential character of the cosmos, who are well versed in the fundamental basis upon which the whole concept of creation is founded, who realise and understand the concepts, inter alia, of the Ātmā, Brahma, creature, body, world and the other aspects of Sāṅkhya philosophy—only such wise, erudite, sagacious, learned, scholarly and enlightened persons would be able to find oneness with the eclectic, truthful, transcendental and supreme entity which is the ultimate Truth and Reality of creation (i.e. Brahma). This is possible because they understand the fundamental principle that their true identity is the Ātmā and not the gross, physical body, and that this Ātmā is a fraction or a reflection of the supreme Ātmā of the cosmos, known as Brahma.]

येषां हि न समापन्ना माया वै विश्वरूपिणी। लभन्त परमं शुद्धं निर्वाणं ते मया सह।।53।।

yeṣāṃ hi na samāpannā māyā vai viśvarūpiṇī /
labhanta paramaṃ śuddhaṃ nirvāṇaṃ te mayā saha //

He who is not shackled by, or allows himself to be mired or engrossed in my Māyā (powers to create delusion and illusions ignited by ignorance) which has a global, cosmic and universal presence everywhere and which is colossus, massive, hefty formidable, majestic and stupendous in its power, reach and size—only such a person is able to obtain the final and complete deliverance and emancipation along with me (i.e. the Ātmā). [That is, when I, the Ātmā, merge my self with my primary source, the Brahma, as mentioned in verse no. 39 and 52 above, such wise persons also attain the same fate as me. That is, my devotees follow the example set by me] (53).

न तेषां पुनरावृत्तिः कल्पकोटिशतैरपि। प्रसादान्मम ते वत्स एतद्वेदानुशासनम्।।54।।

na teṣāṃ punarāvṛttiḥ kalpakoṭiśatairapi /
prasādānmama te vatsa etadvedānuśāsanam //

Such persons do not have to come back and take birth again in this world even in numerous eras, or literally millions of years. Oh son (Hanumāna)! It does happen only by my grace. This is the proclamation and an inviolable maxim pronounced by the Veda (54).

नापुत्रशिष्ययोगिभ्यो दातव्यं हनूमन्क्वचित्। यदुक्तमेतद्विज्ञानं सांख्ययोगसमाश्रयम्।।55।।

nāputraśiṣyayogibhyo dātavyaṃ hanūmankvacit /
yaduktametadvijñānaṃ sāṃkhyayogasamāśrayam //

Oh Hanumāna! This supreme knowledge of the science of Sāṅkhya Yoga (see verse no. 52 and its note) that I have divulged to you or preached you about or have described to you in detail should not at all be given or preached to or divulged before unworthy and incompetent persons, whether they be a son, a disciple or a Yogī (ascetic or hermit, sage or seer) who do not have the requisite aptitude for it' (55).

[Note :—We must not that the profound philosophy of Sāṅkhya Yoga is the essence of the Vedāntic philosophy about Brahma, Ātmā and creature.

Śrī Rāma is a manifestation of the supreme Brahma. So, what we hear in this Canto no. 11 is in effect the supreme Lord speaking himself. It is significant that the pronoun 'I' has been repeatedly used in this Canto—from verse no. 47 right up to verse no. 54. Though it refers to the Ātmā of the creature, but since the speaker here is Śrī Rāma as a manifestation of Brahma, we deduce that the supreme authority of the creation is advising this himself. Therefore, the pronoun 'I' is a metaphor for Brahma speaking in the form of Śrī Rāma. The importance and significance of Sāṅkhya school of philosophy is established by this fact—that it has been pronounced, enunciated and expounded by Brahma himself, and he has chosen it upon the other 5 schools of philosophy to preach Hanumāna who is the wisest amongst the wise. This certainly shows that Brahma must have deemed the Sāṅkhya philosophy as being superior to other schools of philosophy.]

Thus ends Canto 11 of the ancient epic called Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa written by sage Vālmīki describing the principal tenets of Sāṅkhya Yoga.

* * *

Canto 12

Śrī Rāma continues with his metaphysical and spiritual preaching—highlighting the philosophy of the Upaniṣad in this Canto

This Canto supplements Śrī Rāma's discourse to Hanumāna in the previous Canto no. 11. These two Cantos, no. 11 and 12, by themselves ingeniously enumerate and elucidate the basic tenets of the Upaniṣadic philosophy dealing with such entities as the Ātmā and Brahma, the Virāṭ Puruṣa and Prakṛti, their special characteristics and relationships, the origin of creation and its dissolution, the concept of Ahaṅkāra and Kāla, besides establishing the fact that Śrī Rāma himself is the Supreme Lord of creation. He is no ordinary prince or king. It also shows that Śrī Rāma is highly erudite, wise, learned, scholarly and enlightened about the profoundest of metaphysical and spiritual concepts and he is well versed in the philosophy of Vedānta.

पुनः रामः प्रवचनमुवाच द्विजपुङ्गवः। अव्यक्तादभवत्कालः प्रधानं पुरुषः परः।।1।।

punaḥ rāmaḥ pravacanamuvāca dvijapuṅgavaḥ /
avyaktādabhavatkālaḥ pradhānaṃ puruṣaḥ paraḥ //

Śrī Rāma said once again, or he continues with his discourse to Hanumāna, 'Oh exalted Brāhmin (Hanumāna in the disguise of a Brahmacārī) ! From the 'Avyakta' (literally meaning the one who cannot be described and defined, who is invisible and imperceptible, who has no attribute and cannot be comprehended; here referring to the supreme, transcendental, sublime and unmanifested Brahma) energised the 'Kāla' (meaning death; the factors of time, circumstance and eventuality). [See also verse no. 9.] From the latter came into being the supreme, transcendental macrocosmic 'Puruṣa' (the Male aspect of creation; the first manifestation of Brahma. The supreme Being) (1).

[Note :—(i) The first word 'पुन:' links this Canto with the previous one. (ii) Hanumāna had approached Śrī Rāma disguised as a Brāhmin Brahmacārī (see Canto 10, verse no. 11). So, Śrī Rāma addresses him as an exalted Brāhmin here.]

तेभ्यः सर्वमिदं जातं तस्मात्सर्वमिदं जगत्। सर्वतः पाणिपादं तत्सर्वतोऽक्षिशिरोमुखम्।।2।।

tebhyaḥ sarvamidaṃ jātaṃ tasmātsarvamidaṃ jagat /
sarvataḥ pāṇipādaṃ tatsarvato'kṣiśiromukham //

[Verse no. 1-3 describe the macrocosmic form of the supreme Brahma]

From him (the supreme Puruṣa) has emerged this whole cosmos or universe. That Puruṣa has his hands and legs, his head and mouth present everywhere (2).

[Note :—The supreme Puruṣa or Being is also called Virāṭ Puruṣa in the Upaniṣads. He is the composite macrocosmic form of all the individual creatures in this world. Hence, the uncountable number of hands, legs, heads and mouths of all these as many uncountable number of creatures of the creation are in effect the organs of that supreme Puruṣa who has revealed himself in as many forms in all these myriad varieties of creatures of this creation, assuming so many forms that they are beyond imagination, each form being a representative of the Virāṭ Puruṣa.]

सर्वतः श्रुतिमल्लोके सर्वमावृत्य तिष्ठति। सर्वेन्द्रियगुणाभासं सर्वेन्द्रियविवर्जितम्।।3।।

sarvataḥ śrutimalloke sarvamāvṛtya tiṣṭhati /
sarvendriyaguṇābhāsaṃ sarvendriyavivarjitam //

He has his ears in all the directions and he hears everything. He pervades the entire creation and, at the same time, encloses it or envelops it from all the sides. Though he has no physical gross organs of perception and action as we understand them, he possesses all the virtues of these organs so much so that he appears to actually posses them (3).

सर्वाधारं स्थिरानन्दमव्यक्तं द्वैतवर्जितम्। सर्वोपमानरहितं प्रमाणातीतगोचरम्।।4।।
sarvādhāraṃ sthirānandamavyaktaṃ dvaitavarjitam /
sarvopamānarahitaṃ pramāṇātītagocaram //

[The following verses enumerate the different virtues, qualities or characteristics that define Brahma.]

It is the basis and foundation of all that exists (Sarvādhāra); it is eternally and unwaveringly blissful and perpetually full of beatitude and felicity (Sthira Ānanda); it is invisible, indefinable, beyond the purview of speech and comprehension and is attributeless (Avyakta—see also verse no. 1); it is the opposite of duality (i.e. it is a non-dual entity called Advaitya); it is free of all epithets, honours, adjectives and descriptions as well as from all comparisons and similes (Upamā Rahita); it is beyond proof and the requirements of veracity and test (i.e. it does not need a test or proof to establish the veracity of its truthfulness or its existence or its stupendous powers and glories or its majesty and splendour or its authority); it is invisible for a creature's gross eyes (but it can be perceived by the subtle eyes of wisdom i.e. it is Agocara) (4).

निर्विकल्पं निराभासं सर्वाभासं परामृतम्। अभिन्नं भिन्नसंस्थानं शाश्वतं ध्रुवमव्ययम्।।5।।
nirvikalpaṃ nirābhāsaṃ sarvābhāsaṃ parāmṛtam /
abhinnaṃ bhinnasaṃsthānaṃ śāśvataṃ dhruvamavyayam //

It is without a second, without an alternative and without a parallel (Nirvikalpa). It is beyond perception and conception, imagination and vision (Nirābhāsa); but is perceived, viewed, conceived and imagined to be present everywhere (Sarvābhāsa) at the same time. [That is, though Brahma can't be seen like we see any ordinary physical entity in this world, but we can subtly feel and view his presence everywhere, in all that exists around us simply because Brahma is present everywhere in so many divergent forms and he is omnipresent in every nook and corner of the creation.] It is the supreme elixir called Amṛta (and ambrosia which gives eternal eternity, beatitude and felicity to a creature—i.e. it is Parāmṛta). It is unique in the sense that it is separate, de-linked and detached from everything else (Bhinna), but at the same time it is present uniformally and universally in all that exist as its integral and inseparable part (Abhinna). It is universal, eternal and infinite (Śāśvata). It is steady, unwavering, unmoving and undisputable (Dhruva). It is imperishable and not subject to ruin, decay, destruction and annihilation of any kind (Avyayam) (5).

निर्गुणं परमं व्योम तज्ज्ञानं सूरयो विदुः। स आत्मा सर्वभूतानां स बाह्याभ्यन्तरात्परः।।6।।
nirguṇaṃ paramaṃ vyoma tajjñānaṃ sūrayo viduḥ/
sa ātmā sarvabhūtānāṃ sa bāhyābhyantarātparaḥ//

It is without any attributes and any quality or virtue called Guṇas (Nirguṇa); it is supreme and most exalted (Parama); it is (vast, fathomless, measureless, spotless, colourless and faultless) like the sky or space (Vyoma). It shines like the Sun in the sky. Those who are expert, wise, erudite, learned, scholarly, sagacious and enlightened define the knowledge which pertains to it (the Brahma) as having the radiance, glory and splendour as that possessed by the Sun in the sky. It is present as the Ātmā/soul of all the creatures known as Bhūtas. It is present inside as well as outside everything. It is supreme, transcendental, eclectic, sublime, subtle and beyond the reach of anything (6).

सोऽहं सर्वत्रगः शान्तो ज्ञानात्मा परमेश्वरः। मया ततमिदं विश्वं जगदव्यक्तरूपिणा।।7।।
so'haṃ sarvatragaḥ śānto jñānātmā parameśvaraḥ/
mayā tatamidaṃ viśvaṃ jagadavyaktarūpiṇā//

That (supreme entity described in the foregoing verses) is 'me' (Śrī Rāma as a manifestation of Brahma). [The other characteristics or virtues that Brahma possesses are the following—] I (as Brahma) can go wherever I please (i.e. I am all-pervading, immanent and omnipresent). I am calm, peaceful, serene and tranquil (Śānto). My Ātmā is an embodiment of Jñāna (truthful knowledge, erudition and wisdom), i.e. I am called a 'Jñāna Ātmā'. I am indeed that Supreme Being who is the Lord of all the Gods, called Parmeśvara. It is me who is primarily invisible, subtle and unmanifested but who has created and revealed this world having endless dimensions (7).

मत्स्थानि सर्वभूतानि यस्तं वेद स वेदवित्। प्रधानं पुरुषं चैव तत्त्वद्वयमुदाहृतम्।।8।।
matsthāni sarvabhūtāni yastaṃ veda sa vedavit/
pradhānaṃ puruṣaṃ caiva tattvadvayamudāhṛtam//

All the mortal creatures called Bhūtas are present in their primary and subtle forms in me—anyone who knows and comprehends this basic and fundamental fact is said to know the teachings of the Vedas. There are said to be two essential aspects of creation—the first is the chief, primary and supreme authority (Brahma), and the second is the Puruṣa (the supreme Being; the Virāṭ Puruṣa) (8).

[Note :—(i) The creatures of the world have originated from five basic elements created by Brahmā, the creator, at the time of creation. These are earth, water, fire, wind and space in increasing order of subtlety. The creatures are a result of the various permutation and combination in which these elements joined together to create the cosmos. The word 'Bhūta' is very significant because it literally means 'a ghost or a phantom'. It also means 'something that is past and not real'. Hence, everything that is produced from these 5 elements is 'ghost like', it is illusionary, faulty and deceptive. Also, what appears to be true now becomes something of the past in the next moment.

(ii) Vedānta philosophy states that the ultimate emancipation of a creature means that the Ātmā of the creature merges with the supreme Ātmā or soul of the cosmos when the boundary wall or sac covering consisting of this body which separates the Ātmā present inside the creature from the Ātmā of the cosmos outside it is removed. This happens at the time of death when the Prāṇa or the vital life-infusing wind force present inside the body makes its exit and merges or coalesces with the wind present outside the body. In a similar way, the space present inside the body merges or coalesces with the space outside the body once the boundary wall-like body is removed from between them. As a result, the five elements that constitute the composite body of the creature disintegrate into their primary forms and merge with the elements of the cosmos.

(iii) At the time of creation, the attributeless Brahma first created the Virāṭ Puruṣa or its macrocosmic manifestation which had certain attributes. All the attributes that are ascribed to Brahma are intended for that Puruṣa, simply because Brahma is attributeless. The entire cosmos was actually created by that subtle Brahma, but it had done so after first assuming the form of Virāṭ Puruṣa, who was gross at the macro level just like the individual creature is gross at the micro level and its Ātmā is subtle at this level. The Puruṣa is also known as Viṣṇu in the Purāṇas, and this Viṣṇu has manifested as Śrī Rāma. The Brahma entered that invisible Virāṭ Puruṣa as his Ātmā or soul, just like it entered the creature as its Ātmā or soul.]

तयोरनादिर्निष्टिः कालः संयोजकः परः। त्रयमेतदनाद्यन्तमव्यक्तं समवस्थितम्।।9।।
tayoranādirniṣṭiḥ kālaḥ saṃyojakaḥ paraḥ/
trayametadanādyantamavyaktaṃ samavasthitam//

The designated entity that enables the union between them (the creature, the Puruṣa and the Brahma) is the great authority known as 'Kāla'. In fact all these three (the Kāla, the creature and the Puruṣa) have their basis in that eternal, infinite, invisible, indefinable, sublime, subtle and incomprehensible entity known as 'Avyakta' (i.e. Brahma; see also verse nos. 1 and 4 in this context) (9).

[Note :—The word 'Kāla' broadly refers to death or the appropriate and designated time when the duration of life of anything comes to an end. Obviously, a creature can merge his individual Ātmā/soul with the supreme Ātmā/soul only after death when it leaves his body. Similarly, when the time comes, the entire cosmos, at the macro level represented by the Virāṭ Puruṣa, would also dissolve into the supreme Brahma. See verse no. 16, 23 and 24 for further elaboration on the concept of Kāla, and also note to verse no. 8 above. Kāla also means destiny. When things happen beyond control, we usually say 'it is due to Kāla', or 'it is due to destiny'.]

तदात्मकं तदन्यत्स्यात्तद्रूपं मामकं विदुः। महदाद्यं विशेषान्तं सम्प्रसूतेऽखिलं जगत्।।10।।
tadātmakaṃ tadanyatsyāttadrūpaṃ māmakaṃ viduḥ/
mahadādyaṃ viśeṣāntaṃ samprasūte'khilaṃ jagat//

By extension, you (Hanumāna) must treat whatever you see as my, i.e. Śrī Rāma's or Virāṭ Puruṣa's extended form. You must be enlightened about this fact. It is 'me' who has created this entire world, right from the supreme Majesty (i.e. the Puruṣa) to the individual creature (10).

या सा प्रकृतिरुद्दिष्टा मोहिनी सर्व देहिनाम्। पुरुषः प्रकृतिस्थितोऽपिभुंक्ते यः प्रकृतान्गुणान्।।11।।
yā sā prakṛtiruddiṣṭā mohinī sarva dehinām/
puruṣaḥ prakṛtisthito'pibhuṃkte yaḥ prakṛtānguṇān//

This 'Prakṛti' (Nature and its accompanying delusion) is said to delude every creature having a body or form into having misconceptions about the absolute Truth and Reality of this creation. The Puruṣa (both the macrocosmic Virāṭ as well as the individual male creature) is present in the midst of this Prakṛti (Mother Nature). So he cannot be immune to its influence. He is affected by and suffers from the qualities which are an inherent and innate part of Prakṛti as its intrinsic and unavoidable aspect (11).

[Note :—The word Prakṛti has the following connotations—(a) Mother Nature and (b) the natural habits, temperaments and inclinations of a person. The Puruṣa is the male aspect while his female counterpart is the Prakṛti. Since a man resides in this world, he is surrounded by Nature which casts its shadow upon him. All the maverick tricks that Mother Nature knows create an impression upon a man. He is enthralled and so overwhelmed by the deception created by Nature that he forgets about the falsehoods of what he sees, as well as about the truthful nature of his own pure self. He is deluded by false impressions so much so that they appear to be true to him. Consequentially, he drifts along in the swift currents created by those delusions. He acquires the colours of Prakṛti without realising the truth about its falsehood. Prakṛti has also been mentioned in Canto 11, verse no. 17 in the context of Brahma being beyond its purview.]

अहङ्कारो विविक्तत्वात्प्रोच्यते पञ्चविशकः। आद्यो विकारः प्रकृतिर्महनात्मेति कथ्यते।।12।।

ahaṅkāro viviktatvātprocyate pañcaviśakaḥ /
ādyo vikāraḥ prakṛtirmahanātmeti kathyate //

When he gets mired with 'Ahaṅkāra' (ego, self pride, arrogance, haughtiness) or, in other words, when he starts discriminating between the various elements and manifestations of the same supreme Brahma and thinks that he has the powers to create all of them, sustain them and annihilate or destroy them, that he is wise and most enlightened in the creation, that he understands the meaning of Brahma, Prakṛti etc. and has such other egoist emotions and conceptions, he becomes full of pride and haughtiness. It is said that he (the Puruṣa) possesses 25 elements. The various faults, flaws and shortcomings of the creature, which have been present in it from the very beginning, are called its 'Prakṛti' or its innate nature, its natural temperaments, its basic habits and its fundamental tendencies, habits and inclinations. These are like a drag on its Ātmā, and therefore they have a negative influence on the greatness of its Ātmā. Hence, those faults, flaws and shortcomings (such as delusions and ignorance about the Truth) that are present in this creation from the very beginning are dissolved in Prakṛti and its counterpart the Puruṣa as their integral part and form their characteristics. That is why they are called the great 'non-Ātmā' factors (12).

[Note :—(i) Since the visible creation is a manifested form of the invisible forces of Nature; all the characteristics present in the latter would be present in the former. For example, suppose we have red-coloured water. When this water solidifies as ice, the latter will also appear to be red. (ii) The 25 elements are the following-5 Organs of perception (ear, nose, tongue, eye, skin) + 5 Organs of action (hand, leg, mouth, genitals, excretory) + 1 Mana (mind) + 1 Ahaṅkāra (ego, pride, arrogance) + 1 Prāṇa (the vital life-giving breath) + 1 Ātmā (soul) + 1 Buddhi (intelligence) + 5 Perceptions (sight, smell, hearing, taste, touch) + 5 Bhūtas (earth, water, fire, air, space)=25 elements. These have been enumerated in Mahopaniṣad, 1/4 – 69 of Sāma Veda tradition]

विज्ञानशक्तिर्विज्ञानादहङ्कारस्तदुत्थित। एक एव महानात्मा सोहङ्कारोऽभिधीयते।।13।।

vijñānaśaktirvijñānādahaṅkārastadutthita /
eka eva mahānātmā sohaṅkāro'bhidhīyate //

How is Ahaṅkāra produced? Śrī Rāma explains this to Hanumāna here. 'Vijñāna' (logical, systematic, empirical and rational knowledge) empowers a person with all the benefits and powers that accrue with such truthful knowledge. [That is, he acquires expertise, special skills and art of implementing his newly acquired knowledge; he develops maturity, erudition, scholarship and awareness about the facts which are not known to others; this infuses wisdom and sagacity in him and he gets fame, honour, acclaim and respect from others as being a learned man possessing special skills and knowledge. People seek his advice and refer to him.] But the unfortunate part is that this leads to the sprouting of 'Ahaṅkāra' (ego, self praise, self pride, arrogance, haughtiness and hypocrisy) in him. [That is, honour and praise makes a man puffed up with Ahaṅkāra instead of making him humble and submissive.] The supreme Soul is only one. So, when it is over shadowed with these faults as described in previous verses, it gets tainted with Ahaṅkāra. [That is, though the supreme Soul, or Brahma, is pure, immaculate and without any blemish, but once it assumes the form of a Virāṭ Puruṣa, it thinks that it has such immense potential as displayed by the Virāṭ Puruṣa in the form of his stupendous powers to create this colourful and myriad variety of creation. Immediately, it (the supreme Soul or Brahma) gets surrounded by a veil or a cloak of Ahaṅkāra. Being shrouded with this tainted character, it begins to be known as 'Ahaṅkāra', because this Ahaṅkāra shrouds it from all the sides and hides its true, immaculate and uncorrupt form as the supreme Soul of the cosmos which is pristine pure, without any trace of 'Ahaṅkāra', and is unadulterated and pure.] (13)

> [Note :—To illustrate how a veil of 'Ahaṅkāra' makes the otherwise flawless, faultless, immaculate and supreme Soul become identified with this adjective used to define it, let us take the example of any professional. Suppose a man is an expert doctor or a lawyer. No one knows he is a doctor or a lawyer in an alien place or even at his work place in a hospital or a court if he does not don the requisite paraphernalia, e.g. a stethoscope around his neck and a doctor's white robe on his body as a doctor, or a black robe as a lawyer. When he does so, then immediately the people start calling him as a doctor or a lawyer. Now, if he is wise, he will go about his duties in a professional way, but stupid people will become haughty and arrogant, throwing their weight around to impress and influence others for personal gain though in their specific fields or vocations they may not be up to the required professional mark.]

स जीवः सोऽतरात्मेति गीयते तत्त्व चिन्तकैः। तेन वेदयते सर्वं सुखं दुःखं च जन्मसु।।14।।

sa jīvaḥ so'tarātmeti gīyate tattva cintakaiḥ /
tena vedayate sarvaṃ sukhaṃ duḥkhaṃ ca janmasu //

The 'Jīva' (the living entity) is the Ātmā present in the bosom of the creature—this is what wise and scholarly persons who are expert and matured in the truthful knowledge about the basis of creation affirm. When one comes to know of it, he learns about the real meaning of 'Sukha and Duḥkha' (i.e. happiness and joy as well as sorrows and torments) of the various births (14).

> [Note :—A wise person realises that he has been suffering only because of the fact that he has not realised the truth about the basically and inherently calm and peaceful, eternal and imperishable nature of the Ātmā that is merely a witness to all that is happening around it in this world, that it neither takes birth nor dies because it is eternal, and it simply leaves one body to enter another.]

स विज्ञानत्मकस्तस्य मनःस्यादुपकारकम्। तेनाविवेकतस्तस्मात् संसार पुरुषस्य तु।।15।।

sa vijñānatmakastasya manaḥsyādupakārakam /
tenāvivekatastasmāt saṃsāra puruṣasya tu //

That Ātmā is the entity that has a truthful, rational, empirical and logical existence and is the subject matter of all metaphysical knowledge, scholarship and erudition. At the same time, the Ātmā is the embodiment of all rational thoughts and empirical knowledge.

The 'Mana' (mind and heart) is obliged and indebted to it (because this Ātmā gives it correct and enlightened guidance, it shows it the truthful path as a benevolent and kind master and Lord). It is the ignorance about its existence that the Puruṣa (here meaning an individual creature), through his 'Mana', imagines erroneously that this world exists. [That is, only because the creature forgets or is ignorant about the existence of the only truthful entity called the Ātmā, that it thinks that what its sees or observes as the world outside has an actual existence. But this perception about the world is fallacious because there cannot be two truths at the same time; one of them has to be a non-truth, or an imposter. In the present context, the Ātmā is the truthful entity while the world is the imposter.] (15)

स चाविवेकः प्रकृतौ सङ्गात्कालेन सोऽभवत्। कालः सृजति भूतानि कालः संहरते प्रजाः ।।16।।

sa cāvivekaḥ prakṛtau saṅgātkālena so'bhavat /
kālaḥ sṛjati bhūtāni kālaḥ saṃharate prajāḥ //

[Verse nos. 16 and 17 highlight the importance of 'Kāla'.]

The ignorance or lack of wisdom is created or is sparked by the contact which the Prakṛti (see verse no. 11) has with 'Kāla' (see verse nos. 9, 23-24 also). [That is, 'Kāla', as fate, has joined hands with the forces of nature or 'Prakṛti' to create ignorance, lack of wisdom and delusion, collectively called 'Aviveka', in a creature. This is because if there was no ignorance about the Ātmā, there would be complete peace on earth as then all the creatures would treat all others like they would treat themselves, and there would be no cause for hatred, animosity, jealousy and ill will; there would be no wars and strife if everyone was contented and satisfied with whatever he has; there would be no evil mongering and perversions of any kind.] It is the 'Kāla' (here meaning circumstance, time and coincidences) that create everything that exist, and it is the 'Kāla' (here meaning death, fate, destiny) that annihilates (kills, destroys, ruins and brings to an end) all the beings in this creation (16).

सर्वे कालस्य वशगा न कालः कस्यचिद्वशे। सोऽन्तरा सर्वमेवेदं नियच्छति सनातनः ।।17।।

sarve kālasya vaśagā na kālaḥ kasyacidvaśe /
so'ntarā sarvamevedaṃ niyacchati sanātanaḥ //

Everything and everybody is subservient to and a subordinate of

'Kāla'; they are all subject to the kind grace of 'Kāla'. The latter is not subordinate to anyone.

That truthful, universal and eternal entity (Brahma) is present in the bosom of all the beings (as their Ātmā), and it regulates, controls, gives leadership and exercises authority over all that exist (17).

प्रोच्यते भगवान्प्राणः सर्वज्ञः पुरुषः परः। सर्वेन्द्रियेभ्यः परमं मनः प्रहुर्मनीषिणः।।18।।

procyate bhagavānprāṇaḥ sarvajñaḥ puruṣaḥ paraḥ /
sarvendriyebhyaḥ paramaṃ manaḥ prahurmanīṣiṇaḥ //

It is the Ātmā that is known as 'Bhagavāna', 'Prāṇa', 'Sarvajña' (omniscient, all knowing and wise), and the 'supreme Puruṣa'. Those who are expert, learned and scholarly call the 'Mana' (mind) as an organ that is separate from and independent of all other organs of the body, and is the most exalted and superior to all of them (18).

[Note :—(i) The word 'Bhagavāna' loosely means the supreme God. It has two components Bhaga+vāna. The 'Vāna' component means 'one who possesses or rides upon', such as a person who rides a rickshaw is called a 'Rickshaw-Vāna', a lucky man is called 'Bhāgya-Vāna', a wealthy man is called 'Dhana-Vāna'. The main component of the word 'Bhagavāna' is 'Bhaga'—it means to have the following virtues—(a) Aiśvarya, meaning majesty, pomp, pageantry, flourish, grandeur, glory, supremacy, greatness, omnipotence, power, dominance and sway; (b) Dharma, meaning the virtues of righteousness, nobility of thought and conduct, probity and propriety and auspiciousness; (c) Yaśa, meaning good fame and name, renown and honour; (d) Śrī, meaning wealth, prosperity, wellbeing; (e) Jñāna, meaning knowledge, wisdom, erudition, scholarship, enlightenment, expertise, skill and sagacity; (f) Vairāgya, meaning renunciation, dispassion and detachment from this mundane and artificial world and its objects. Therefore, Bhagavāna is a person who possesses all these qualities, or these qualities are subservient to him, he controls them and is their Lord.

(ii) The word 'Prāṇa' generally means 'life or breath'. But in Vedānta there are five types of Prāṇa; these are the vital winds that sustain life in the creature as well as the creation. These are the following—(a) Prāṇa, meaning the vital breath which infuses and sustains life in the body of a creature; (b) Apāna, meaning the wind which moves down the alimentary canal; it is responsible for ingestion of food and its passage down the intestine till it is excreted; (c) Samāna, meaning the wind that help in circulation of blood and nutrition derived from food consumed by the creature uniformally throughout the body; it helps in distribution of blood and nutrition in the body; (d) Vyāna, meaning the wind that controls the activity of all other winds; and (e) Udāna meaning the wind which passes upwards—such as during coughing, exhalation, belching. This is the wind which helps the subtle, sublime energy trapped in the coiled energy centre called Kuṇḍalinī to rise up along the spine and help the Yogī/ascetic in his meditation exercise to acquire stupendous powers. This wind also helps in speaking.

(iii) There are said to be eleven organs in a creature's body. They have been described in Canto 11, verse no. 42 and its note no. (i). There are 5 organs of perception (ears, nose, eyes, tongue and skin), 5 organs of action (hands, legs, mouth, anus and genitals) and 1 organ called the 'Mana' (mind and heart; thoughts and emotions). All the stimuli or information gathered by the organs of perception are passed on to the mind which not only sieves through them and stores them, but also directs the organs of action to respond to them accordingly. When the mind needs guidance, it consults its boss, the intellect. This intellect works as a Personal Assistant to the Supreme Authority, the Ātmā, which guides and gives leadership to the intellect. The Ātmā interacts with the outside world through these levels of hierarchy—the Ātmā-intellect-mind-organ of action or organ of perception. The 'Mana' (mind, intellect and heart) has a separate identity than the other organs. Whereas the latter are collectively called 'the gross body of the creature', the 'Mana' is called 'the subtle body'. The Ātmā resides in the 'causal body' surrounded by the layers of various Vāsanās and Vṛttis which are the different passions and tendencies inherently present in a creature respectively and cover it like a veil.

The Ātmā consults both the intellect as well as the heart to make a decision. When it consults the intellect, it gets empirical and clinical advice based on rational thinking and logic, whereas the advice that it gets from the heart is more sentimental and emotional in nature. Therefore, the actions of the Ātmā under the influence of the intellect are more intelligent and well thought of in nature as compared to those under the influence of the heart when they tend to become more emotional than logical and rational.]

मनसश्चाप्यहङ्कारमहङ्कारान्महान् परः। महतः परमव्यक्तमव्यक्तात्पुरुषः परः।।19।।

manasaścāpyahaṅkāramahaṅkārānmahān paraḥ /
mahataḥ paramavyaktamavyaktātpuruṣaḥ paraḥ //

Beyond or superior to the 'Mana' (heart and mind) is 'Ahaṅkāra' (ego, arrogance, haughtiness and pride). Beyond or superior to Ahaṅkāra is 'Mahān' (great, magnificent and macrocosmic but manifested). Beyond or superior to 'Mahān' is 'Avyakta' (that which is not manifest). And beyond or superior to 'Avyakta' is the 'Puruṣa' (the male aspect of creation; the Virāṭ Puruṣa or Viṣṇu; the supreme Being). [That is, Mana is junior to Ahaṅkāra, Ahaṅkāra is junior to Mahān, Mahān is junior to Avyakta and Avyakta is junior to Puruṣa.] (19)

पुरुषाद्भगवान्प्राणस्तस्य सर्वमिदं जगत्। प्राणात्परतरं व्योम व्योमातीतोऽग्निरीश्वरः।।20।।
puruṣādbhagavānprāṇastasya sarvamidaṃ jagat /
prāṇātparataraṃ vyoma vyomātīto'gnirīśvaraḥ //

Beyond or superior to Puruṣa is the Lord called 'Prāṇa' (the vital life sustaining wind force). The whole world is under the control of Prāṇa. Beyond or superior to Prāṇa is 'Vyoma' (sky or space), and beyond or superior to Vyoma is 'Īśvara' (the supreme Lord) in the form of the fire element called 'Agni' (20).

सोऽहं सर्वत्रगः शान्तो ज्ञानात्मा परमेश्वरः। नास्ति मत्परमं भूतं मां विज्ञान विमुच्यते।।21।।
so'haṃ sarvatragaḥ śānto jñānātmā parameśvaraḥ /
nāsti matparamaṃ bhūtaṃ māṃ vijñāna vimucyate //

I (Śrī Rāma) am that all-pervading, omnipresent, immanent and all-encompassing supreme Lord known as Īśvara who is none else but the calm, tranquil, peaceful and blissful Ātmā which is an embodiment of enlightenment, wisdom and erudition. [That is, I am that supreme Lord who is omnipresent and immanent in the cosmos, calm and peaceful like the Ātmā which is the only enlightened and wise entity in the creation.] There is nothing beyond or superior to me. A creature gets liberation and deliverance from the fetters that tie it down to this mundane, artificial world by realising me (i.e. my true, essential, primary form which is pristine pure, divine, subtle, sublime, eclectic and transcendental) (21).

नित्यं हि नास्ति जगति भूतं स्थावरजङ्गमम्। ऋते मामेकमव्यक्तं व्योमरूपं महेश्वरम्।।22।।
nityaṃ hi nāsti jagati bhūtaṃ sthāvarajaṅgamam /
ṛte māmekamavyaktaṃ vyomarūpaṃ maheśvaram //

This world consisting of both the movable and immovable mortal creatures known as 'Bhūtas' (see note to verse no. 8), is not the truth. The only entity that does have a truthful existence is 'me' who is the supreme and great Lord called Maheśvara, who is without any attributes, is invisible and unmanifest, who cannot be defined and described by the faculty of speech, and who is as vast, fathomless, measureless, eternal, immaculate, faultless and spotless as the sky (22).

सोऽहं सृजामि सकलं संहरामि सदा जगत्। मायी मायामयो देवः कालेन सह सङ्गतः ।।23।।

so'haṃ sṛjāmi sakalaṃ saṃharāmi sadā jagat /
māyī māyāmayo devaḥ kālena saha saṅgataḥ //

It is always me who creates the whole cosmos and subsequently destroys, concludes or annihilates it. [That is, no one besides me is the creator as well as the annihilator of the entire cosmos. I create as well as conclude it.] I am that supreme, maverick and majestic Lord who does everything in conjunction with or in union with and with the aid of 'Kāla' (23).

[Note :—The word 'Kāla' has already been defined in verse nos. 9 and 16 above.]

मत्सन्निधावेष कालः करोति सकलं जगत्। नियोजयत्यनन्तात्मा ह्येतद्वेदानुशासनम् ।।24।।

matsannidhāveṣa kālaḥ karoti sakalaṃ jagat /
niyojayatyanantātmā hyetadvedānuśāsanam //

It is in my presence or under my supervision or my guidance that 'Kāla', representing the favourable and appropriate time and circumstances, helps to create the cosmos or the entire world, and directs or orders the eternal, endless and supreme Ātmā to enter it, or inject itself subtly, imperceptibly, quietly into it. Verily, this is what the Vedas proclaim. This is the maxim of the Vedas.

[Note :—(i) Kāla first creates circumstances which are conducive to fostering life. So, first it creates the habitat for that life where it can find a place to live when it makes its final appearance. Then, when the foundation and shelter is ready, Kāla creates the inhabitance of that dwelling, the creature, which would live in that creation. 'What will the creature do without a life?' So Kāla orders the supreme Ātmā to take up a residence in the heart of the creature. It is like the spark that sets forth the chain of life creating process. When things go out of hand, the 'Kāla' creates circunstances that conclude life.

(ii) Some of the important tenets of 'Advaitya' (non-dual) philosophy, inter alia, as propounded by Śaṅkarācārya are the following—(i) 'Brahma' (the absolute Reality and Truth; the absolute pure consciousness and awareness; the absolute bliss, happiness and tranquility; beatitude and felicity) is the only, irrefutable, immutable, indivisible eternal Reality and Truth. (ii) The 'object' (world) that is seen or observed is a mirage-like illusion, a result of hallucinations caused by ignorance incited by Māyā.

(iii) 'Māyā' (the delusion creating powers of ignorance) is neither true nor false; it simply has no existent par se, because there are certainly no 'two' entities. (iv) 'Īśvara' is Brahma in reference to the Māyā (i.e. it is Māyā that makes one believe that Brahma has taken the form of Īśvara, or Īśvara and Brahma are not dual. (v) 'Mokṣa' is liberation obtained through knowledge of Brahma, whereby the individual creature establishes his true identity with it.]

Thus ends Canto 12 of the ancient epic called Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa written by sage Vālmīki describing the basic tenets of Upaniṣad pertaining to the Ātmā, Brahma, Kāla, Ahaṅkāra, Jīva (creature) and the Prakṛti (creation).

* * *

Canto 13

Śrī Rāma highlights the importance of devotion for his divine Self besides enumerating his divine attributes and the fact that he is the one who is praised by the Vedas as the very cause of creation

This Canto is a continuation of the discourse that Śrī Rāma gave for the benefit of Hanumāna in the earlier two Canto nos. 11 and 12. Here, the importance of 'Bhakti', or unconditional allegiance, surrender, faith, devotion, worship and having reverence for Śrī Rāma as a manifestation of the Supreme Being is highlighted. Śrī Rāma emphasises the point that he is not merely an incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu, the sustainer of the creation as has been stressed by the Purāṇas, but he is the manifestation of that Supreme Being, called Brahma, who is the cause of the origin of not only the entire creation but also of Lord Viṣṇu himself. By corollary then, Śrī Rāma is superior to Viṣṇu, and he embodies in himself all the Gods as well as the rest of the creation including the animate as well as the inanimate creatures. This is amply made clear by him in verse nos. 15-32. The importance of worship is stressed in the first half of the Canto in verse no. 1-14.

The Holy Bible also asserts about 'Bhakti'—'*In him we live and move, and have our being*' (Acts, 17/28), '*Trust in him at all times, you people, pour out your heart before him; for God is a refuge for us*' (Psalms, 62/8).

वक्ष्ये समाहितमनाः शृणुष्व पवनात्मज। येनेदं लीयते रूपं येनेदं सम्प्रवर्तते।।1।।
नाहं तपोभिर्विविधैनं दानेन च चेज्यया। शक्यो हि पुरुषैर्ज्ञातुमृते भक्तिमनुत्तमाम्।।2।।

vakṣye samāhitamanāḥ śṛṇuṣva pavanātmaja/
yenedaṃ līyate rūpaṃ yenedaṃ sampravartate//
nāhaṃ tapobhirvividhainaṃ dānena ca cejyayā/
śakyo hi puruṣairjñātumṛte bhaktimanuttamām//

Śrī Rāma preached to Hanumāna, 'Oh the son of the Wind-God! Listen carefully to what I say. That supreme entity from whom all these various myriad forms of this creation have unfolded themselves and from whom all the numerous forms having so many innumerable shapes, contours and countenance have emerged, that entity is 'me' (1).

I am not pleased by the numerous austerities and penances called Tapa that a man does or the strict religious vow that he keeps, nor am I pleased by the numerous charities that he makes or the generous donations or alms that he gives, neither am I known or understood by doing different 'Yajñas' (fire sacrifices, religious ceremonies and observing different sacraments). Only those who have 'Bhakti' or devotion for me, who worship me, adore me and have reverence for me, are able to successfully attain me (2). [1-2]

अहं हि सर्वभावानामन्तस्तिष्ठामि सर्वगः। मां सर्वसाक्षिणं लोके न जानन्ति प्लवङ्गम।।3।।

ahaṃ hi sarvabhāvānāmantastiṣṭhāmi sarvagaḥ/
māṃ sarvasākṣiṇaṃ loke na jānanti plavaṅgama//

I am omnipresent and omniscient, and am the culmination of all ideas, views, perceptions and conceptions about the existence, soul and birth. Oh the brave and exalted one (Hanumāna) ! I am that witness to everything who the world is not able to understand and comprehend (3).

[Note :—Compare this verse with verse no. 4 of Canto 14.]

यस्यान्तरा सर्वमिदं यो हि सर्वान्तरः परः। सोऽहं धाता विधाता च लोकेऽस्मिन्विश्वतोमुखः।।4।।

yasyāntarā sarvamidaṃ yo hi sarvāntaraḥ paraḥ/
so'haṃ dhātā vidhātā ca loke'sminviśvatomukhaḥ//

He in whose bosom all this that exist is present, he who prevails uniformally and universally in all that exist as an integral, inherent and intrinsic part of it all, and he who is even beyond all that exist, i.e. he who transcends and goes beyond all that exist—verily, it is 'me'. I am the creator as well as the sustainer and the concluder and the one who determines the destiny of all that exist in this world. I, in effect, am immanent and pervade in this world uniformally and universally (4).

न मां पश्यन्ति मुनयः सर्वेऽपि त्रिदिवौकसः। ब्राह्मणा मनवः शक्रा ये चान्ये प्रथितौजसः ।।5।।

na māṃ paśyanti munayaḥ sarve'pi tridivaukasaḥ /
brāhmaṇā manavaḥ śakrā ye cānye prathitaujasaḥ //

All Gods including the Trinity Gods (Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva) and the sages, seers, hermits and ascetics are not able to see me (or have a holy view of my divine countenance), and neither are these Brāhmins, Manu (the first male; here meaning offsprings of Manu, the human race), Indra (the king of Gods) and other exalted Gods competent enough to see or witness me (if they do not fulfill the requirements for my divine vision) (5).

[Note :—By eliminating the Trinity and other Gods, sages and seers, Brāhmins and other high caste humans from the list of those who can have a divine view of the supreme, transcendental Lord, Śrī Rāma wishes to emphasise that 'devotion' is an essential requirement and important ingredient to be able to 'see' the Lord, to 'witness' him and 'experience him'. The 'Lord' referred here, again, is not Lord Viṣṇu, simply because Viṣṇu is one of the Trinity Gods who have been shown to be incompetent to see the supreme Lord. Then, who is he? That supreme, transcendental and sublime entity is none other than 'Brahma' who is the ultimate Truth and absolute Reality in creation, and who is adored, admired, honoured, glorified and worshiped by the Vedas and the Upaniṣads. It is this Brahma who has been described by Śrī Rāma in the two earlier Canto nos. 11 and 12 also. The Gods and others are only one of the umpteen numbers of manifestations of Brahma.

In brief, Śrī Rāma emphasises the point that he is a manifestation of that supreme, transcendental and sublime Brahma, and not simply an incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu. Through these three Cantos (nos. 11-13), Śrī Rāma wishes to remove all doubts about his divinity.]

गृणन्ति सततं वेदा मामेकं परमेश्वरम्। जयन्ति विविधैरग्नि ब्राह्मणा वैदिकैर्मखैः ।।6।।

gṛṇanti satataṃ vedā māmekaṃ parameśvaram /
jayanti vividhairagni brāhmaṇā vaidikairmakhaiḥ //

All the Vedas constantly, consistently and persistently worship, revere, laud, adore, glorify and honour me. I am the only one divine, supreme, transcendental and sublime Lord and authority in the creation. They say that it is me who is worshipped, honoured, revered, lauded and praised by the Brāhmins (priests) when they offer fire sacrifices in different ways. [That is, I am the supreme Lord who is offered the different oblations and libations made during the various fire sacrifices done by Brāhmin priests by chanting the hymns of the Vedas and making offerings to the sacrificial fire during religious ceremonies] (6).

सर्वेलोका नमस्यन्ति ब्रह्मलोके पितामहम्। ध्यायन्ति योगिनो देवं भूताधिपतिमीश्वरम्।।7।।

sarvelokā namasyanti brahmaloke pitāmaham /
dhyāyanti yogino devaṃ bhūtādhipatimīśvaram //

All the creatures of the world bow reverentially before and pay their obeisance to the honourable and revered patriarch of the creation (i.e. Brahmā, the creator) who is none other than me dwelling in the Brahma Loka. Yogīs (ascetics) and all the Gods or masters of the creation (such as Gods and worldly kings) worship and honour the supreme Lord by constantly contemplating and meditation upon him as well as always remembering and invoking him (7).

अहं हि सर्वयज्ञानां भोक्ता चैव फलप्रदः। सर्वदेवतनुर्भूत्वा सर्वात्मा सर्व संस्तुतः।।8।।

ahaṃ hi sarvayajñānāṃ bhoktā caiva phalapradaḥ /
sarvadevatanurbhūtvā sarvātmā sarva saṃstutaḥ //

I am the one to whom all the religious rituals and fire sacrifices are offered; I am the one who gives the reward for such sacrifices. Since I have manifested myself as the body of all the Gods (or, all the Gods are none other than my own self revealed in different forms), I am that omnipresent, immanent, all-pervading and all-encompassing Ātmā which is worshipped, adored, admired, glorified, lauded, honoured and revered by all (8).

मां पश्यन्तीह विद्वान्सो धार्मिका वेदवादिनः। तेषां सन्निहितो नित्यं ये भक्ता मामुपासते।।9।।

māṃ paśyantīha vidvānso dhārmikā vedavādinaḥ /
teṣāṃ sannihito nityaṃ ye bhaktā māmupāsate //

Those righteous and virtuous ones who are wise and enlightened as well as experts in the doctrines of the Vedas are able to see and perceive me based on the principles laid down in the Vedas. However, those devotees who worship, honour and adore me, I constantly reside near them (though they may not be as learned, erudite and sagacious as their other brethrens who are well versed in the Vedas) (9).

ब्राह्मणाः क्षत्रिया वैश्या धार्मिका मामुपासते। तेषां ददामि तत्स्थानमानन्दं परमं पदम्।।10।।

brāhmaṇāḥ kṣatriyā vaiśyā dhārmikā māmupāsate/
teṣāṃ dadāmi tatsthānamānandaṃ paramaṃ padam//

Those righteous and virtuous Brāhmins (the priest class), Kṣatriyas (the warrior class) and Vaiśyas (the trading class) who worship, honour and adore me, I bestow them or bless them or reward them with the supreme stature known as 'Paramapada' (literally meaning the highest state which a creature can aspire to attain). This state is characterised by supreme beatitude and felicity (10).

अन्येऽपि ये विकर्मस्थाः शूद्राद्या नीच जातयः। भक्तिमन्तः प्रमुच्यन्ते कालेन मयि सङ्गताः।।11।।

anye'pi ye vikarmasthāḥ śūdrādyā nīca jātayaḥ/
bhaktimantaḥ pramucyante kālena mayi saṅgatāḥ//

Besides them, all other lower classes such as the Śūdras who have been assigned a low rung in the strata of social hierarchy because of their vocations and deeds, also attain liberation and deliverance by being close to me by the virtue of their having unwavering devotion for and a sincere allegiance and commitment to me, i.e. by having a wholesome devotion for and allegiance towards me (11).

न मद्भक्ता विनश्यन्ते मद्भक्ता वीतकल्मषाः। आदावेतत्प्रतिज्ञातं न मे भक्तः प्रणश्यति।।12।।

na madbhaktā vinaśyante madbhaktā vītakalmaṣāḥ/
ādāvetatpratijñātaṃ na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati//

My sincere and ardent devotees become free from sins and faults, and they do not perish. It has been my promise since the beginning that my devotees do not and will not perish (12).

यो वा निन्दति तं मूढो देवदेवं स निन्दति। यो हि तं पूजयेद्भक्त्या स पूजयति मां सदा।।13।।

yo vā nindati taṃ mūḍho devadevaṃ sa nindati/
yo hi taṃ pūjayedbhaktyā sa pūjayati māṃ sadā//

The stupid and ignorant persons who criticises and prick holes with my devotees is deemed to be criticising and demeaning all the Gods. On the contrary, he who respects, honours, reveres, admires or worships them (my devotees) is deemed to be always paying obeisance and showing respect to me (13).

पत्रं पुष्पं फलं तोयं मदाराधनकारणात्। यो मे ददाति नियतः स मे भक्तः प्रियो मतः।।14।।

patraṃ puṣpaṃ phalaṃ toyaṃ madārādhanakāraṇāt /
yo me dadāti niyataḥ sa me bhaktaḥ priyo mataḥ //

He who offers leaves of the holy plants (such as Tulasī—the leaves of the Basil plant), flowers, fruits and water to me reverentially, with affection and due respect during formal worshipping, are known as my devotees and are dear to me (14).

अहं हि जगतामादौ ब्रह्माणं परमेष्ठिनम्। विधाय दत्तवान्वेदानशेषानास्य निःसृतान्।।15।।

ahaṃ hi jagatāmādau brahmāṇaṃ parameṣṭhinam /
vidhāya dattavānvedānaśeṣānāsya niḥsṛtān //

At the time of the beginning of creation, it is me who creates the 4-headed Brahmā (the creator) and give him all the Vedas (representing the composite body of knowledge) which have emerged from my mouth, or which I have pronounced, proclaimed and promulgated myself for the benefit of mankind (15).

[Note :—(i) The word 'Parameṣṭhi' has the following connotations—(a) the 4-headed Brahmā, the patriarch of the Gods and the creator of the creation; (b) other Gods such as the Fire-God; (c) the Virāṭ Puruṣa, the macrocosmic male aspect of creation from whom the rest of the creation emerged and evolved; (d) the first human named Manu who had a gross physical body having eyes which could see; the first intelligent Being who could 'see' the truth enshrined in the Vedas which were uttered by Brahmā and were the absolute and immutable truths of creation.

(ii) Different version exists about the first cosmic Male. One belief is that he was Viṣṇu from whose navel a divine lotus emerged, at the end of which was seated Lord Brahmā, the old patriarch of creation. According to this conception, Viṣṇu is an analogue to Brahma. Another view suggests that he was called the Virāṭ Puruṣa. But generally speaking, both the terms are synonymously used.

(iii) Regarding the Vedas, again two versions exist—according to one, Lord Virāṭ Puruṣa gave them to Brahmā, the patriarch of the creation, and according to another version they were produced from the mouth of Brahmā himself. See also Canto 15, verse no. 7. Basically, the Upaniṣadic version favours the latter version of the origin of the Vedas, while the Purāṇas prefer the former (the Viṣṇu) version.]

अहेव हि सर्वेषां योगिनां गुरुरव्ययः। धार्मिकाणां च गोप्ताहं निहन्ता वेद विद्विषाम्।।16।।

aheva hi sarveṣāṃ yogināṃ gururavyayaḥ /
dhārmikāṇāṃ ca goptāhaṃ nihantā veda vidviṣām //

I am the eternal, imperishable, supreme and transcendental moral preceptor and guide of the Yogīs (ascetics, hermits). I am the protector and benefactor of those who are righteous, noble and virtuous. I am the vanquisher and slayer of those who are the opponents of the Vedas (and the rightful path shown by them) (16).

अहं वै सर्व संसारान्मोचको योगिनामिह। संसारहेतुरेवाहं सर्वसंसारवर्जितः।।17।।

ahaṃ vai sarva saṃsārānmocako yogināmiha /
saṃsārahetur evāhaṃ sarvasaṃsāravarjitaḥ //

I join hands with Yogīs (hermits and ascetics) to provide liberation and deliverance to the world. I am the one who is the cause of the entire creation and am the authority that stops the world, or puts a leash on it, or controls and restrains all its activities (17).

[Note :—The hermits and ascetics are righteous and pious people. They act as guide and a beacon of hope for the world which is like a ship trapped in the ocean of delusion and ignorance, buffeted violently by its rough surface. The Lord, along with the Yogīs, hermits and other holy and pious people show the right path to the creatures and help in their spiritual liberation from the fetters that shackle them to this delusionary and painful world even as a lighthouse helps the ship to avoid shipwreck in a violent sea.]

अहमेव हि संहर्ता स्त्रष्टाहं परिपालकः। मायावी मामिका शक्तिर्माया लोकविमोहिनी।।18।।

ahameva hi saṃhartā sraṣṭāhaṃ paripālakaḥ /
māyāvī māmikā śaktirmāyā lokavimohinī //

I am the annihilator/concluder, the creator and the sustainer/nourisher of the world. It is my stupendous and magnificently maverick powers that deludes the entire world and keeps it enthralled (18).

ममैव च पराशक्ति या सा विद्येति गीयते। नाशयामि तया मायां योगिनां हृदि संस्थितः।।19।।

mamaiva ca parāśakti yā sā vidyeti gīyate /
nāśayāmi tayā māyāṃ yogināṃ hṛdi saṃsthitaḥ //

One of my stupendous, supreme, most marvelous, fascinating and potent powers is known, praised and sung as 'Vidyā' (meaning truthful knowledge of the Truth; erudition, sagacity, scholarship, wisdom and expertise obtained as an accompaniment to acquisition of such knowledge; a knowledge which is empirical, logical and rational). While staying in the bosom (literally, the heart) of Yogīs, I destroy (eliminate, dispel and remove) that very 'Māyā' (delusions and ignorance) which is my own creation (19).

[Note :—What a paradox of creation—first the delusions are created by ignorance, then it becomes necessary to eliminate both the ignorance and its progeny, the delusion. Well, the first step of creating delusion was very necessary just imagine a situation when all humans suddenly become enlightened and realise that all the world is an artificial illusion, that they should contemplate upon the Ātmā and withdraw themselves from this faulty world. The entire world would become one big hermitage or a monastery inhabited by recluses and monks. There will be no process of procreation, because every household will abhor sexual union. There will be no progress because all people would be satisfied with whatever they have. Necessity would cease to exist, and without necessity there would be no new invention and discovery. While it is true that there would be peace and tranquility in the world, but the spin off would be the complete stopping of the wheel of material progress, discovery and evolution, and there will be no desire accentuated by needs and passions. In brief, the world will stop to move and revert to the 'stone age'.

Since the very purpose of creation would be killed in this eventuality, it was necessary for Brahma to create Māyā. But even as anything created with good intentions becomes a Frankenstein Monster one day—as is the case with dynamite, gunpowder, nuclear energy, rocket technology, electronics and even the gun—it becomes imperative to put a leash on this howling, barking and terrifying dog. So, the Lord created 'Vidyā'—or knowledge. This Vidyā served two purposes it helped to channelise the vast burst of energy created by delusions into constructive purpose, and at the same time it helped to antidote it by showing the darker side of that Monster. Vidyā, in modern parlance, was like the infra red night vision goggle which helps man to see the reality even in the pitch darkness of the night symbolised by the darkness of delusion created by Māyā. It was also like razor sharp rays of laser which could penetrate and precisely hit at the core of ignorance and delusion, collectively called Māyā. And even as any source of laser beam needs sufficient power to generate it, the heart of the Yogī—who had that imperative potential—was the seat of Ātmā which is enlightened and knowledgeable. See also Canto 14, verse no. 6 in this context.]

अहं हि सर्वशक्तीनां प्रवर्तकनिवर्तकः। आधारभूतः सर्वेषां निधानममृतस्य च।।20।।

ahaṃ hi sarvaśaktīnāṃ pravartakanivartakaḥ /
ādhārabhūtaḥ sarveṣāṃ nidhānamamṛtasya ca //

I am the origin and progenitor of all 'Śakti' (literally meaning powers, strengths, prowess, vitality, energy, abilities, vigour, might, authority, push, punch and potency). I am the 'Ādhāra' of all the Bhūtas, i.e. I am the foundation, the basis, the dwelling place and the shelter as well as the strength, powers and potentials upon which the whole creation consisting of the 5 basic elements (earth, water, fire, wind, space) is founded. I am a treasury where the 'Amṛta' (the ambrosia or elixir of eternity, beatitude and felicity) is stored (20).

एका सर्वान्तरा शक्तिः करोति विविध जगत्। भूत्वा नारायणोऽनन्तो जगन्नाथो जगन्मयः।।21।।

ekā sarvāntarā śaktiḥ karoti vividha jagat /
bhūtvā nārāyaṇo'nanto jagannātho jaganmayaḥ //

That one supreme authority that is all-pervading, omnipresent and immanent has delineated the world into myriad forms with diverse shapes, contours and qualities. It is the same authoritative entity that has revealed itself as 'Nārāyaṇa' (Viṣṇu), 'Ananta' (literally meaning one without an end), 'Jagannātha' (literally meaning the Lord of the world) and 'Jaganmaya' (literally meaning one who has revealed himself as this world, uniformally and universally pervading throughout it) (21).

तृतीया महती शक्तिर्निहन्ति सकलं जगत्। तामसी मे समाख्याता कालात्मा रुद्ररूपिणी।।22।।

tṛtīyā mahatī śaktirnihanti sakalaṃ jagat /
tāmasī me samākhyātā kālātmā rudrarūpiṇī //

The three great and potential power that annihilates or destroys the entire creation is known as 'Tāmasī' (referring to those qualities that are considered lowly and mean, leading to vices and perversion and other unholy and unrighteous behaviours). It is also known as 'Kālātmā' (literally meaning destruction and death personified), and it is a manifestation of 'Rudra' (or a form of Śiva as an embodiment of anger, wrath, vehemence and retribution). [See canto 14, verse no. 13-13½] (22).

[Note :—There are 3 basic categories of qualities in a creature—Sat, the most noble and best of the three qualities, Raja which is the medium and mediocre quality, and Tama which is the lowly and the meanest quality. It is these three qualities which leads to all the degrading and demeaning actions by a creature—such as having perversions, animosity, ill will, jealousy, hatred, anger, wrathfulness etc. People with a predominance of 'Tama' quality are quarrelsome and always ready to create nuisance. It is considered to be the quality which stands for death, ruin and destruction as opposed to 'Sat' quality which stands for creation, development, evolution and upliftment of the creature, and 'Raja' quality which stands for enhancement, sustenance and progress in this world].

ध्यानेन मां प्रपश्यन्ति केचिज्ज्ञानेन चापरे। अपरे भक्तियोगेन कर्मयोगेन चापरे।
सर्वेषामेव भक्तानामेष प्रियतरो मम।।23।।

dhyānena māṃ prapaśyanti kecijjñānena cāpare/
apare bhaktiyogena karmayogena cāpare/
sarveṣāmeva bhaktānāmeṣa priyataro mama//

Some see my divine and auspicious form by doing 'Dhyāna' (i.e. during contemplation and mediation) while others perceive me by 'Jñāna' (i.e. by pursuing the truthful knowledge as contained in the scriptures). There are some who pursue the path of 'Bhakti' (having devotion and doing worship) while others follow the tents of 'Karma Yoga' (which emphasises the importance of doing deeds righteously, virtuously, dispassionately and selflessly as a means to serve the Lord and attain him) in order to have my divine and auspicious view. Out of all of them, those who are my devotees, i.e. those who follow the path of devotion and worship, are most dear to me (23).

यो विज्ञानेन मां नित्यमाराधयति नान्यथा। अन्येच ये त्रयो भक्ता मदाराधनकांक्षिणः।।24।।
तेऽपि मां प्राप्नुवन्त्येव नावर्तते च वै पुनः। मया ततमिदं कृत्स्नं प्रधान पुरुषात्मकम्।
मयेव संस्थितं विश्वं मया सम्प्रेर्यते जगत्।।25।।

yo vijñānena māṃ nityamārādhayati nānyathā/
anyeca ye trayo bhaktā madārādhanakāṃkṣiṇaḥ//
te'pi māṃ prāpnuvantyeva nāvartate ca vai punaḥ/
mayā tatamidaṃ kṛtsnaṃ pradhāna puruṣātmakam/
mayeva saṃsthitaṃ viśvaṃ mayā sampreryate jagat//

Those who worship and honour me by following the path of 'Jñāna' (following the path of truthful knowledge about Ātmā, Brahma etc. acquired by studying the Vedas and other scriptures) are not doing so in vain. All the other three types of worship (i.e. Dhyāna, Jñāna and

Karma Yoga as defined in verse no. 23 above) offered to me by my sincere devotees also entitles and enables them to have access to me who am the chief Lord of the creation (i.e. they can also attain the supreme Brahma), and consequentially they do not have to come back into this world again (i.e. they do not take re-birth because they would have attained emancipation and deliverance of their souls). This entire cosmos is established in me and I am the one undisputed authority who regulates it. (24-25).

[Note :—(i) See also Canto 14, verse no. 2 in this context.

(ii) It is pertinent to note here that the main thrust of Yoga is to establish a union between the conscious Ātmā of an individual and the conscious Ātmā of the cosmos. Besides the exercise aspect of Yoga, there are other schools of philosophy for this 'conscious realisation'.

There are said to be 4 main paths of Yoga which lead to self realisation in a man or makes him aware of the super conscious residing in him. They are—(i) Jñāna Yoga, (ii) Bhakti Yoga, (iii) Karma Yoga and (iv) Rāja Yoga.

(i) Jñāna Yoga involves the intellect and mind to determine and delineate the true and the false; it helps to access and understand the reality and falsehood behind the manifested visible world which appears to be 'real' but is actually like a 'shadow of the truth'. This Jñāna Yoga helps to establish the mind firmly into seeing unity in diversity. Those following Jñāna Yoga are called 'seers' because they can 'see' beyond the visible, multifarious and bewildering variety of this false world. Jñāna Yoga is in the realm of the intellect and mind of a creature.

(ii) Bhakti Yoga refers to having devotion for a chosen Godhead who is a person's ideal, on whom he showers all his adoration, and on whom he focuses his attention. He is emotionally and sentimentally involved with his deity. Hence, the heart is the realm of Bhakti Yoga; it helps to commune with the divine.

(iii) Karma Yoga expounds on the importance of doing deeds and taking actions, but with a different attitude. It stresses that we must not get 'involved or attached' to those deeds or action in as much as we shouldn't be bothered about the rewards or punishments incumbent on such deeds or actions. We must do them dispassionately and with detachment. The action or deed should be treated as one's offering to the God as well as an offering to the sacred fire sacrifice. This will ensure that the actions or deeds are not unrighteousness, corrupt or evil. On the contrary, whatever is done in which a person's subtle sub-conscious says is not the correct thing to do will be deemed to be unrighteous, unethical and unlawful, and therefore cannot be an offering to either the God or the sacred fire sacrifice.

(iv) Raja Yoga is the psycho-spiritual practice of exercise and breath control; it involves the various steps involved in meditation and contemplation, as is generally understood by the term Yoga. This Yoga lays emphasis on physical training of the body and the mind, and is the subject matter of numerous Upaniṣads dealing with such exercises (e.g. Yoga Cūḍāmaṇī of Sāma Veda). It deals with such subject as Prāṇāyāma, purification and activation of Nāḍīs, kindling of Cakras (subtle energy centers in the body) etc.

These four types of Yogas are not mutually exclusive; they coalesce and overlap with each other and their main aim is to help the aspirant seeker in his pursuit of 'self realisation'.]

नाहं प्रेरयिताकीश परमं योगमाश्रितः। प्रेरयामि जगत्कृत्स्नमेतद्यो वेद सोऽमृतः।।26।।
nāhaṃ prerayitākīśa paramaṃ yogamāśritaḥ /
prerayāmi jagatkṛtsnametadyo veda so'mṛtaḥ //

I rely perpetually on eternal Yoga (meditation and contemplation) that is supreme, transcendental and eternal in nature. I am not inspired or advised by anyone. Instead, I am the only one authority who inspires this world to expand in its diverse and myriad forms; I impel it, drive it, inspire it and keep its momentum. Anyone who knows and realises this has known and realised the essence (of the teachings of the scriptures) (26).

पश्याम्यशेषमेवेदं वर्तमानं स्वभावतः। करोति काले भगवान्महायोगेश्वर स्वयम्।।27।।
paśyāmyaśeṣamevedaṃ vartamānaṃ svabhāvataḥ /
karoti kāle bhagavānmahāyogeśvara svayam //

By nature I look at this world, perceive it and understand it as it is present now. At the opportune time, the Lord known as 'Mahā Yogeśvara' (or the Lord who is the great Lord of all ascetics) creates it himself (27).

योगं सम्प्रोच्यते योगी मायी शास्त्रेषु सूरिभिः। योगेश्वरोऽसौ भगवान्महादेवो महाप्रभुः।।28।।
yogaṃ samprocyate yogī māyī śāstreṣu sūribhiḥ /
yogeśvaro'sau bhagavānmahādevo mahāprabhuḥ //

Those ascetics who are experts, learned and scholarly in the scriptures and the texts dealing with Yoga' (doing meditation and contemplation), know about the art, craft and skills used by the maverick creator to create this creation and ensure its annihilation or conclusion at the same time. They call all this that is happening a form of Yoga. [That is, they treat the whole world as a means to apply in practice what they have learned in the scriptures and proved by doing meditation and contemplation.] The great Lord Mahādeva is the Lord of all the ascetics. [Here, Mahādeva is Lord Śiva because he is the patron God of ascetics.] (28).

महत्वात्सर्वसत्त्वानां वरत्वात्परमेश्वरः। प्रोच्यते भगवान्ब्रह्मा महान्ब्रह्ममयो यतः॥29॥

mahatvātsarvasattvānāṃ varatvātparameśvaraḥ /
procyate bhagavānbrahmā mahānbrahmamayo yataḥ //

He (the supreme, transcendental, sublime and all-pervading Brahma) is the ultimate and magnificent essence of all the essences that exist in the world. Though he resides uniformally in all the creatures as their Ātmā, he is much superior to them, he transcends and supersedes them, and that is why he is called 'Parmeśvara' (literally meaning the supreme and ultimate Lord God of all that exist). When the exalted Supreme Being (here referring to the macrocosmic form of Brahma, that is the Virāṭ Puruṣa) embodies in him all the virtues of Brahma, he is known by the name of Lord Brahmā, the creator (29).

[Note :—(i) Brahma is the ultimate truth though the other Gods such as Viṣṇu, Brahmā, Mahādeva or Śiva, Indra etc. also have a truthful existence. It is a case analogues to refining any liquid extract of, say, a flower many times over so as to arrive at the purest form of the essence of the flower. Taking another example, we may distil water many times over to get the purest and the ultimately best form of refined water. But even the less distilled water or essence of a flower would still be known as water and essence respectively.

(ii) Brahmā, the patriarch of the creation, has certain characteristic qualities which are exclusive to him and which make him the nearest analogue to Brahma, the Supreme Being who is the Supreme Soul of the cosmos. Brahmā has the power to create and control destiny—and therefore he virtually decides the time of annihilation or death of the world, though the actual task of annihilating or ending this world or causing death is delegated to Lord Śiva, but the mandate to do so comes from the supreme authority, who is not Brahmā but Brahma, but the former has been delegated this authority by the latter. Brahmā unfolds the world when he turns his head in the four directions and uttered the four basic words Bhūḥ, Bhuvaḥ, Svaḥ and Mahā (symbolising the creation of the earth, the sky, the heavens and the great creation having countless variety and number of creatures, small and big, who would populate it) as well as the Vedas (Ṛg, Yajur, Sāma and Atharva) and the profound body of wisdom and knowledge contended in them. (See Mahopaniṣad, Canto 1, verse no. 9 of the Sāma Veda tradition). Knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment are the chief characteristic of Brahma represented by the Ātmā/soul. Brahmā also has these characteristic features because he is the one who has not only created the physical world but also the great body of knowledge in the form of the Vedas. Brahmā is depicted as a white-bearded and learned grandfather of creation. This is a symbolic way of saying that he is the oldest and wisest one amongst all those who live. Even Viṣṇu and Śiva and all the other Gods are much younger to him. Both the two Gods (Viṣṇu and Śiva) are known to exhibit some elements of Rajoguṇa and Tamoguṇas, i.e. they have some sort of worldly characteristics such as showing anger, having passion etc. or assuming different forms as in the case of their various manifestations, but Brahmā, the old bearded patriarch, remains one original without any manifestation, much like the supreme Brahma who remains detached from and dispassionate towards the creation, although he is the cause of it, is responsible for it and is the resting place for it.]

यो मामेवं विजानाति महायोगेश्वरेश्वरम्। सोऽविकम्पेन योगेन युज्यते नात्र संशयः ।।30।।

yo māmevaṃ vijānāti mahāyogeśvareśvaram /
so'vikampena yogena yujyate nātra saṃśayaḥ //

A person who realises the truth about me and my truthful form and recognises me as a 'Mahāyogeśvara', is able to remain steady, unwavering, unfaltering in his spiritual pursuits. There is no doubt about it (30).

[Note :—The divine, great and majestic Lord of ascetics, the Lord who is the aim and objective of all meditation and contemplation or Yoga, the Lord who is superior to all other Gods and creatures, the great Lord who ever remains engrossed in Yoga, and the Lord who is transcendental, auspicious, supreme, great, stupendous and majestic amongst all that exist, is a Yogī or an exalted ascetic par excellence. The scriptures say that the Virāṭ Puruṣa had to do meditation and contemplation or Yoga in order to initiate the process of creation. Even Brahmā, the creator, had to do yoga (meditation) to initiate the physical process of creation (Aitareyopaniṣad of Ṛg Veda tradition). So the epithet 'Mahāyogeśvara' is very apt for Śrī Rāma who is not only a manifestation of the Virāṭ Puruṣa or Lord Viṣṇu, but also represents Brahmā, the creator, as well as Śiva, the concluder. In fact, all those three Gods of the Trinity had done meditation, and Śrī Rāma personifies all the three of them at once. That is why 'Mahā' or 'the great and majestic one' is used as a prefix or an epithet while describing him as a 'Yogeśvara' or the 'Lord of Yoga (meditation)' or the 'Lord of those who do Yoga']

सोऽहं प्रेरयिता देवः परमानन्दमाश्रितः। तिष्ठामि सततं योगी यस्तद्वेद स वेदवित्।।31।।

so'haṃ prerayitā devaḥ paramānandamāśritaḥ /
tiṣṭhāmi satataṃ yogī yastadveda sa vedavit //

I am that Supreme Being who inspires and empowers all the Gods. I am an embodiment of supreme beatitude and felicity. I am permanently established in Yoga (doing meditation and contemplation). Anyone who realises and understands this fact is deemed to know the essence of the Vedas (31).

इति गुह्यतमं ज्ञानं सर्ववेदेषु निश्चितम्। प्रसन्नचेतसे देयं धार्मिकायाहिताग्नये।।32।।

iti guhyatamaṃ jñānaṃ sarvavedeṣu niścitam /
prasannacetase deyaṃ dhārmikāyāhitāgnaye //

This most profound but secret wisdom and knowledge has been determined and postulated as the 'truth' by the Vedas themselves. [And, therefore, there is no doubt about it.] It should be divulged or preached only to those persons who perform their religious duties, such as observing different sacraments and doing various sacrifices and other righteous deeds, most cheerfully and willingly. [This is because only those people who have interest in spiritual matters will take interest in these tenets and benefit from them. For the rest, it would be tantamount to barking up the wrong tree and trying to make a piece of coal white by washing it with soap and water. Such people will ridicule it.] (32)

Thus ends Canto 13 of the ancient epic called Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa written by sage Vālmīki describing the importance of having devotion and reverence for the supreme Lord of the creation in the form of Śrī Rāma.

* * *

Canto 14

Śrī Rāma's divine, supreme, transcendental cosmic powers and stupendous potentials

In this Canto, Śrī Rāma describes the incredible nature of his divine powers which are supreme and transcendental, stupendous, eclectic and most magnificent. He in essence tells Hanumāna that whatever is seen or perceived in this world, all the happenings and all the driving forces of nature are nothing else but his own potential powers and glory revealed in myriad forms. He is the ultimate Authority who has delegated his powers to different entities to carry on with the routine work of the creation; everything works under the Lord's command and control mechanism, are subject to the laws and rules laid down by the supreme Lord. No one can violate the Lord's mandate. This whole creation is due to the wish of the Lord, is sustained and protected by him, and it finally dissolves in him. This is the essence of this Canto which also concludes Śrī Rāma's discourse for Hanumāna which he had started to give him in Canto 11. These four cantos, nos. 11-14, have a high element of spiritual quotient in them. They summarise the principal doctrines of the Upaniṣads in a succinct manner and in a lucid language.

सर्वलोकैकनिर्माता सर्वलोकैकरक्षिताः। सर्वलोकैकसंहर्ता सर्वात्माऽहं सनातनः ॥1॥

sarvalokaikanirmātā sarvalokaikarakṣitāḥ /
sarvalokaikasaṃhartā sarvātmā'haṃ sanātanaḥ //

I am the creator and progenitor, the sustainer and protector, the vanquisher and annihilator of the entire creation. I am the Ātmā that is all-pervading, omnipresent and immanent as well as eternal, infinite, universal, irrefutable and truthful (1).

सर्वेषामेव वस्तूनामन्तर्यामी पिता ह्यहम्। मय्येवान्तःस्थितं सर्वं नाहं सर्वत्र संस्थितः ॥2॥

sarveṣāmeva vastūnāmantaryāmī pitā hyaham /
mayyevāntaḥsthitaṃ sarvaṃ nāhaṃ sarvatra saṃsthitaḥ //

I am the Father who is omniscient and all-knowing as well as a resident of the bosom of all the creatures. All that exist in the world is established in my bosom (because I am all-encompassing). Nay, it is me who is established everywhere (because I am omnipresent, all-pervading and immanent) (2).

[Note :—This is a magnificent verse. The word used for the supreme Lord is 'Father', the way he is described in the Holy Bible—'*I and my Father are one*' (Gospel of St. John, 10/30). The Father referred to here is the Brahma of the Upaniṣads.]

भवता चाद्भुते दृष्टं यत्स्वरूपं तु मामकम्। ममैषा ह्युपमा वत्स मायया दर्शिता मया।।3।।

bhavatā cādbhute dṛṣṭaṃ yatsvarūpaṃ tu māmakam /
mamaiṣā hyupamā vatsa māyayā darśitā mayā //

Oh son (Hanumāna)! The magnificent and majestic form of my divine self that you had seen (as in Canto 10, verse nos. 13-18) was created by me using my stupendous maverick and magical powers to create visual images (i.e. I can create the greatest illusions in this world like an expert magician) (3).

सर्वेषामेव भावानामन्तरा समवस्थितः। प्रेरयामि जगत्सर्वं क्रियाशक्तिरियं मम।।4।।

sarveṣāmeva bhāvānāmantarā samavasthitaḥ /
prerayāmi jagatsarvaṃ kriyāśaktiriyaṃ mama //

I am inherently present as an integral part of all emotions and sentiments, all inclinations and tendencies and lend them their innate qualities and virtues. I am the one who inspires, impels, empowers and drives this whole world to do what it is doing. Whatever is happening is a display of my own powers to act and do deeds (4).

[Note :—Compare this verse with verse no. 3 and 26 of Canto 13.]

मयेदं चेष्टते विश्वं मत्स्वभावनुवर्ति च। सोऽहं काले जगत्कृत्स्नं करोमि हनुमन् किल।।5।।

mayedaṃ ceṣṭate viśvaṃ matsvabhāvanuvarti ca /
so'haṃ kāle jagatkṛtsnaṃ karomi hanuman kila //

This world is a result of my own efforts and it follows my views, nature and tendencies. Oh Hanumāna! It is me who initiates the process of creation at the opportune time (5).

[Note :—See also Canto 13, verse nos. 15, 17, 20, 21, 25, 26 and 31 in this context.]

संहराम्येकरूपेण द्विधावस्था ममैव तु। आदिमध्यान्तनिर्मुक्तो मायातत्त्व प्रवर्तकः।।6।।

saṃharāmyekarūpeṇa dvidhāvasthā mamaiva tu /
ādimadhyāntanirmukto māyātattva pravartakaḥ //

In one of my forms, I am the annihilator or concluder of this world (or bring about the end of this entire creation). This is my dual role (as a creator as well as an annihilator). I am without a beginning, middle and an end. I am the one who inspires the elementary form of 'Māyā' (the virtues of delusions and illusion creation in this artificial world) to play its maverick tricks and cast it spell on the whole world (6).

[Note :—(i) The same dual role of the Lord has been cited in Canto 13, verse no. 17-19, 21-22, 29-30 and explained as a note to them. (ii) Māyā, as referred to in this verse and verse no. 3 above, refer to the magical powers of the Lord to create delusions and ignorance about the actual truth, leading the creature towards falsehoods and misconceptions. It is almost like creating the mirage in the desert. The concept of Māyā has been explained in detaial in note to verse no. 35 of canto 25 of this book]

क्षोभयामि च सर्गादौ प्रधानपुरुषावुभौ। ताभ्यां सञ्जायते सर्वं संयुक्ताभ्यां परस्परम्।।7।।
kṣobhayāmi ca sargādau pradhānapuruṣāvubhau /
tābhyāṃ sañjāyate sarvaṃ saṃyuktābhyāṃ parasparam //

In the very beginning of creation, it was me (as a subtle, invisible, divine force) that had caused perplexity and agitation in the mind of the supreme, omnipotent, almighty and majestic Lord called Vibho as well as in the mind of the Chief Puruṣa. They together produced the whole creation as we know it (7).

[Note :—(i) The word 'Vibho' is an epithet used to describe the virtues of Lord Viṣṇu who is synonymous with both Nārāyaṇa as well as the Virāṭ Puruṣa. The word 'Chief Puruṣa' is here used to denote the Virāṭ Puruṣa as well as Lord Śiva or Mahādeva. Though appearing to be confusing, when the fact that 'their union resulted in the creation getting started' is considered, the distinction becomes clear in view of what has been unambiguously stated in an Upaniṣad called Mahopaniṣad, Canto 1 of Sāma Veda tradition cited in the explanatory note to verse no. 10 below. The Virāṭ Puruṣa felt lonely and so he meditated. The very fact that he felt lonely shows that loneliness was agitating his mind and was a cause of perplexity for him. He meditated so that there can be some activity in his non-active environs. From him was thus produced the trident wielding Lord Śiva, the annihilator and then later on came Brahmā, the creator. The rest of the story is narrated in note to verse no. 10 below.

(ii) Another interpretation of this verse is that 'Vibho' refers to Brahma while the word 'Chief Puruṣa' refers to Lord Viṣṇu in the form of Virāṭ Puruṣa. It is due to the joint efforts of Brahma and the Virāṭ Puruṣa that this creation has come into being.

(iii) Verse no. 6 above tells us that Śrī Rāma, as the Supreme Being, is both the creator as well as the annihilator of the world, roles played separately by Viṣṇu and Śiva respectively. Hence, the implication is that Śrī Rāma represents both Viṣṇu and Śiva at the same time.]

महदादिक्रमेणैव मम तेजो विजृम्भितम्। यो हि सर्वजगत्साक्षी कालचक्रप्रवर्तकः।।8।।

mahadādikrameṇaiva mama tejo vijṛmbhitam /
yo hi sarvajagatsākṣī kālacakrapravartakaḥ //

In the form of 'Mahāt' (literally meaning my magnificence, glory, majesty, stupendous powers) and the other aspects/elements of creation, it is my marvelous glory, vital energy and stupendous majesty that pulsates, radiates and spreads everywhere, in all the directions of the cosmos. It is my consciousness and vitality that is witnessing everything in this world, and it is it that keeps the wheel of time and circumstances turning endlessly (8).

हिरण्यगर्भो मार्तण्डः सोऽपि मद्देहसम्भवः। तस्मै दिव्यं स्वमैश्वर्यं ज्ञानयोगं सनातनम्।।9।।

hiraṇyagarbho mārtaṇḍaḥ so'pi maddehasambhavaḥ /
tasmai divyaṃ svamaiśvaryaṃ jñānayogaṃ sanātanam //

The Hiraṇyagarbha is radiant and splendorous like the sun called 'Mārtaṇḍa'. It has been created from my transcendental, subtle and sublime body. I have bestowed upon it my divine potentials and majestic glories as well as empowered it with 'Jñāna' (wisdom, erudition, sagacity, expertise, skills and knowledge) that is eternal, imperishable, truthful and infinite (9).

[Note :—(i) The word 'Hiraṇyagarbha' has two components—'Hiraṇya' meaning yellow, and 'Garbha' meaning the womb. Hiraṇyagarbha was the primordial cosmic fertilised egg deriving its name from the fact that its yolk core was yellow and glowing with an incandescent light like the one effusing from the splendours sun in the sky called the Mārtaṇḍa. It was lodged in the womb-like navel of the Virāṭ Puruṣa. It also resembled the musk deer in the sense that musk spreads its fragrance everywhere but it is not visible because it is hidden in the abdomen of the deer. Similarly, this Hiraṇyagarbha had spread its glory, radiance and splendour through the length and breath of the void of the cosmos, but was not visible itself.

(ii) This entire concept of Hiraṇyagarbha being produced from the body of the Supreme Being called Nārāyaṇa or Īśvara have been elaborately dealt with in Mahopaniṣad, Canto 1, verse no. 8 of the Sāma Veda tradition.

(iii) Hiraṇyagarbha is the cosmic subtle body according to the Vedānta. The 'body' referred to by Śrī. Rāma here is the causal body of the macrocosm, called 'Īśvara' by Vedānta. See also note to verse no. 10 below.

(iv) The word 'Mārtaṇḍa' refers to the Sun or the Sun-God; as such, the word is used as an adjective to describe anything that has the characteristics of the sun, such as being glorious, splendorous, dazzling and radiant as well as self illuminated and illuminating the realm around it, being powerful and central to existence.]

दत्तवानात्मजावेदान् कल्पादौ चतुरः किल। स मन्नियोगतो ब्रह्मा सदा मद्भाव भावितः ।।10।।

dattavānātmajāvedān kalpādau caturaḥ kila /
sa manniyogato brahmā sadā madbhāva bhāvitaḥ //

To my offspring (created from me when this Hiraṇyagarbha matured and this cosmic egg hatched into the Virāṭ Puruṣa), I gave the four Vedas at the beginning of the 'Kalpa' (i.e. at the beginning of a fresh cycle of creation). That offspring was called Brahmā, and he was authorised by me to start the process of creation; he remains under my control and guidance. He follows my instructions, my views and remains faithful to my wishes (10).

[Note :—(i) The word 'Kalpa' literally means a period of times equivalent to 432 × 10 earth years of mortals which is equivalent to 1 day of Brahmā, the creator. But in the context of this text, it means the day when Brahmā was born, and this creation first came into existence.

(ii) Brahmā was created from the Virāṭ Puruṣa. He was assigned the task of creation, the desire for which first originated in the mind of the Virāṭ Puruṣa because he did not like loneliness. The entire sequence of events has been described in Mahopaniṣad, Canto 1, verse no. 1-9 of the Sāma Veda tradition. Briefly, it is as follows—The Supreme Being present at the beginning of creation was all alone. He was called Nārāyaṇa. This Being did not like the void of nothingness (Canto 1, verse 1-3). So he did a symbolic Yoga called 'Yogaṣṭoma' and produced the 11 organs (5 organs of perception, 5 organs of action and 1 mind-intellect called the Mana), 'Ahaṅkāra' (ego and pride), 'Prāṇa' (breath and life) and 'Ātmā' (soul; the atomic nucleus, as it were, of the cosmos), bringing the total to 14 basic elements of creation. Besides that, he created 'Buddhi' or intelligence. He also created the 5 sheaths or veils that cover the Ātmā (i.e. the food, vital air, mental, intellect and bliss sheaths) to encase and cover the Ātmā, and the five basic elements called the 'Bhūtas' (the earth, water, fire, air and space) which were to act as building blocks for the would-be gross creation. These elements formed the first gross body of the cosmos, called the Virāṭ Puruṣa. (Canto 1, verse no. 4-6).

As a next step, Nārāyaṇa injected himself in the Virāṭ Puruṣa like a spark of fire in a haystack, to infuse the much needed vitality of life in the gross body of the Virāṭ, and literally and virtually setting the whole stack, which was hitherto inert and neutral, afire. Henceforth, Nārāyaṇa, who was none other than the supreme, transcendental Brahma, began to be known as Virāṭ Puruṣa.

Now, this Virāṭ meditated, and from his forehead emerged the great Lord called Mahādeva, or Lord Śiva (Canto 1, verse no. 7). The Virāṭ meditated again, and due to this exertion, sweat drops appeared on his forehead, which coalesced to form the primordial fluid called 'Āpaḥ' (literally meaning water). From this coagulated cosmic jelly came into being the Hiraṇyagarbha which further evolved into the 4-headed Brahmā (Canto 1, verse no. 8).

The 4-headed Brahmā wished to do something; and so he turned his face in the 4 cardinal directions—East, West, North and South, and each time he uttered some words which formed the nucleus of the various manifestations of creation. While facing East, he pronounced the word 'Bhūḥ' (—earth), and created the Gāyatrī Chanda (which are poetic composition styles), the Fire-God and the Ṛg Veda; facing West, he said 'Bhuvaḥ' (the sky) and created the Triṣṭup Chanda and the Yajur Veda as well as the Wind-God; facing North, he said 'Svaḥ' (heavens) and created the Jagatī Chanda, the Sun-God and the Sāma Veda; and finally facing South, he said 'Mahaḥ' (—the great worlds), the Anuṣṭup Chanda, the Moon-God and the Atharva Veda (Canto 1, verse no. 9).

Brahmā is therefore known as the creator of this whole manifested world. But as we have seen, he derives his powers and authority to create what he has created from the Virāṭ Puruṣa who is the macrocosmic primary Male aspect of creation in whom the whole creation resides; who not only pervades in it but also envelopes it from all the sides like a parameter wall, and whose authority goes even beyond that outer parameter wall of the cosmos, right up to where infinity goes! Further, this Virāṭ Puruṣa has himself evolved from Brahma known as Nārāyaṇa. It was this form that was revealed to Hanumāna by Śrī Rāma in Canto no. 10, verse no. 13-18 of this Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa.

The above is the version of creation of this world according to the Purāṇas also. From metaphysical point of view, Nārāyaṇa is called 'Īśvara' and he is the causal body of the cosmos, while 'Hiraṇyagarbha' is the subtle body and 'Virāṭ Puruṣa' is the gross body of the cosmos at its invisible macro level. Their counterparts at the micro level of the visible creation, e.g. the individual creature, are 'Prajñā' which is the causal body of the creature, 'Taijas' which is the subtle body, and 'Viśva' which is the gross body. These 6 terms are used for the pure consciousness when it acts through the three levels of existence, viz. the deep sleep state of consciousness, the dream state and the waking state of consciousness respectively of the cosmos in the first three cases, and the individual creature in the latter three cases. A separate appendix explains these concepts briefly]

दिव्यं तन्मामकैश्वर्यं सर्वदा वहति स्वयम्। स सर्वलोकनिर्माता मन्नियोगेन सर्ववित्।।11।।

divyaṃ tanmāmakaiśvaryaṃ sarvadā vahati svayam /
sa sarvalokanirmātā manniyogena sarvavit //

He (Brahmā, the creator) always and constantly wears the mantle of my divine glories, majesty, splendour, grandeur, powers of supremacy and sway over the whole creation. That creator of the whole creation follows my wishes and orders (or, he does what I desire to be done or works in consultation with me) (11).

भूत्वा चतुर्मुखः सर्वं सृजत्येवात्मसम्भवः। योऽपि नारायणोऽनन्तो लोकानां प्रभवाव्ययः।।12।।
ममैव परमा मूर्तिः करोति परिपालनम्।। 12½।।

bhūtvā caturmukhaḥ sarvaṃ sṛjatyevātmasambhavaḥ /
yo'pi nārāyaṇo'nanto lokānāṃ prabhavāvyayaḥ //
mamaiva paramā mūrtiḥ karoti paripālanam /

He assumed four heads as per my wish and made the creation of this whole universe possible (11½).

Similarly, Nārāyaṇa, who is endless and infinite, is the supreme Lord of all the worlds created by Brahmā and who is imperishable and eternal (12), sustains, nourishes, protects and generally takes care of the creation as my supreme representative and my embodiment, i.e. he is like my own image, my own self, and he has all the characteristic virtues, powers and potentials that I have (12½). [11½-12½]

[Note :—Here Śrī Rāma treats 'Nārāyaṇa' as being distinct from his own self. There should be no confusion here because Śrī Rāma is 'Brahma' or Īśvara personified, whereas Nārāyaṇa is another name of Viṣṇu. Śrī Rāma is talking in the language of Vedānta here, and not that of the Purāṇas, for according to the latter, Śrī Rāma is the incarnation of Nārāyaṇa or Viṣṇu, and as such this verse will appear to have no coherent meaning. See also canto 13, verse no. 21]

योऽन्तकः सर्वभूतानां रुद्रं कालात्मकः प्रभुः।।13।।
मदाज्ञयाऽसौ सततं संहारत्येव मे तनुः।। 13½।।

yo'ntakaḥ sarvabhūtānāṃ rudraṃ kālātmakaḥ prabhuḥ //
madājñayā'sau satataṃ saṃhāratyeva me tanuḥ /

He who is the annihilator or terminator of all the 'Bhūtas' (i.e. the mortal creatures) is called Rudra (Lord Śiva). That Lord is my manifestation as the annihilator or terminator of all that exist. I have assumed that body or form to vanquish and slay everything (that is evil and pervert). It is under my orders and on my authrotiy that anything is ever done. [See also canto 13, verse no. 22] (13-13½).

हव्यं वहति देवानां कव्यं कव्याशिनामपि ।। 14 ।।
पाकं च कुरुते वहिः सोऽपि मच्छक्तिचोदितः ।। 14½ ।।

havyaṃ vahati devānāṃ kavyaṃ kavyāśināmapi //
pākaṃ ca kurute vahiḥ so'pi macchakticoditaḥ /

The offerings of food that are made to the Gods as well as to the dead ancestors (14) are cooked by the fire which derives the powers to do so (i.e. to cook the food meant for the Gods and dead ancestors) from me. That is, the vital energy and heat that the fire requires to do anything is not of its own origin, but has been given to it by me. I have delegated this authority to the Fire-God. It is but my energy and my potentials which the fire possesses (14½). [14-14½]

भुक्तमाहारजात यत्पचत्येतदहनिशम् ।। 15 ।।
वैश्वानरोऽग्निर्भगवानीश्वरस्य नियोगतः ।। 15½ ।।

bhuktamāhārajāta yatpacatyetadahaniśam //
vaiśvānaro'gnirbhagavānīśvarasya niyogataḥ /

Whatever food that is eaten is digested in the body by the eternal fire present in it. This fire is called 'Lord Vaiśvānara' who performs this task on my instructions and authority. That is, I give that 'fire' its strength, ability, potential and energy to enable it to digest all that is eaten by a creature. The fire acts upon my specific direction and command. I have appointed this Vaiśvānara Fire (Agni) to perform this task on my behalf (15-15½).

[Note :—(i) The word 'Vaiśvānara Agni' refers to the eternal fire which burns in the cosmos in a subtle and imperceptible form to keep the flame of life inherently and constantly burning. It represents the 'consciousness' factor of the creation; the 'warmth' of fire is a sign of life whereas 'cold' is a harbinger of and synonym with death. Amongst the five elements created at the time of creation (earth, water, fire, air, space), it is the fire which is the only element which has energy, heat, light, splendour, dazzle and radiance. The water will be nothing else but ice and of no use to the creature without fire as far as its ability to harbour and sustain life is concerned. Similarly, the earth would freeze cold and covered with a thick sheet of ice were it not for the eternal fire burning inside it, even under the ocean bed covered to the brim with water which acts as an antidote to fire. This very fact shows that the Supreme Lord is active in the fire and prevents it from being doused by water because the Lord needs it to sustain life as much as he needs the water. Further, without heat there will be no seasons, no currents, no movements in the air. There will be no formation of clouds and there will be no rainfall in the absence of heat. In brief, the vital spark of life in this world is represented by the 'fire element', hence, it is called the 'Lord of the Viśva', or Lord Vaiśvānara. Śrī Rāma means that this fire element derives its vitality, stamina, energy and potentials from Brahma whose manifestation Śrī Rāma is.

(ii) The word 'Niyojana or Niyojgata' literally means to appoint, to direct, to order, to deploy. Hence, the fire has been appointed, directed, ordered and deployed by the supreme Lord to carry out the function of digesting the food eaten by the creature to help sustain its life and provide it with the necessary energy and nourishment.]

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यो हि सर्वाम्भसां योनिर्वरुणो देवपुङ्गवः ।।16।।
स सञ्जीवयते सर्वमीशस्यैव नियोगतः ।। 16½ ।।

yo hi sarvāmbhasāṃ yonirvaruṇo devapuṅgavaḥ //
sa sañjaīvayate sarvamīśasyaiva niyogataḥ //

The patron and exalted deity for all the forms that the water element has taken in this creation is called 'Varuṇa'. He (Varuṇa) sustains and propagates life in this world with the powers, authority and the ability to do so delegated to it by the supreme Lord of the creation. He works under his (i.e. my) direction (16-16½).

योऽन्तस्तिष्ठति भूतानां बहिर्देवो निरञ्जनः ।।17।।
मदाज्ञयासौ भूतानां शरीराणि बिभर्ति हि।। 17½ ।।

yo'ntastiṣṭhati bhūtānāṃ bahirdevo nirañjanaḥ //
madājñayāsau bhūtānāṃ śarīrāṇi bibharti hi //

That Lord who is known as 'Nirañjana' (literally, one who is invisible, pure, holy and divine as well as without any faults, taints and blemishes) and who is present inside as well as outside of a creature, looks after, sustains, protects and nourishes the bodies of all the creatures under my orders, authority, powers and command (17-17½).

योऽपि सञ्जीवनो नृणां देवानाममृताकरः ।।18।।
सोमः स मन्नियोगेन चोदितः किल वर्तते ।। 18½ ।।

yo'pi sañjaīvano nṛṇāṃ devānāmamṛtākaraḥ //
somaḥ sa manniyogena coditaḥ kila vartate //

That which is the best fount of 'Amṛta' (ambrosia or elixir of eternity, bliss and felicity) available to the Gods is called 'Soma', and it functions under my orders, authority, powers and guidance (18-18½).

[Note :—The word 'Soma' also means the Moon. So, Śrī Rāma refers to both the elixir of life as well as the Moon-God when he uses the word Soma. The implication is that the celestial body moon, which is one of the manifested forms of the Gods and which is the store house of Amṛta, is under the sway and authority of the Supreme Being in the form of Śrī Rāma, even as the personification of that Amṛta in the form of Moon-God is also obedient to him.

'Soma' generally refers to an invigorating drink or elixir that provides nourishment to the Gods; that Soma is the drink of eternity, beatitude and felicity. It is stored in the moon like water is soaked in a sponge or stored in a glass pitcher. This is the Amṛta over which the Gods and demons had fought during the legendary churning of the ocean in search of this ambrosia of life. Soma is also the sanctified liquid used during fire sacrifice rituals to offer libations to the Gods. Since Amṛta is infused with radiance, and it is vibrant and bubbling with divine and glorious life, the moon appears to shine in a silvery, soothing and comforting way. According to mythology, it is the Amṛta that is seen in the pitcher-like moon.]

यः स्वभासा जगत्कृत्स्नं प्रकाशयति सर्वदा ।।19।।
सूर्यो वृष्टिं वितनुते शास्त्रेणैव स्वयम्भुवः ।। 19½ ।।

yaḥ svabhāsā jagatkṛtsnaṃ prakāśayati sarvadā //
sūryo vṛṣṭiṃ vitanute śāstreṇaiva svayambhuvaḥ /

That Sun which always keeps the entire world naturally illuminated by its dazzling, bright and splendorous light, does produce rain on the instructions of Lord Svayambhu (19-19½).

[Note :—(i) The word 'Svayambhu' refers to the primal man represented by the creator Brahmā as well as the Virāṭ Puruṣa who were both born from the Lord called Nārāyaṇa who is deemed to be their father. Svayambhu was the male aspect of creation, and his female counter part was Mother Nature. The word means 'someone who was born out of his own free will'. So, Virāṭ Puruṣa and Brahmā are generally regarded as Svayambhu, because both were born out of their own free will as a manifestation of Brahma. Please also see verse nos. 27 and 27½, and 36½ and 39½. 'Svayambhu Manu' was the first male born on earth and from him the rest of the creation was born.

The word 'Svayambhu' also means 'self existent' and refers to Brahma, while 'Svayambhu Manu' is Brahmā, the Prajāpati or the Lord and sustainer of the subjects of this creation; he is a representative of the Male aspect of creation, the Virāṭ Puruṣa, and is primal male par excellence; he is the divine father of the human race. The name 'Manu Svayambhu' is especially applied, in the context of the Purāṇas of which Rāmāyaṇa is a part, to 14 successive mythical progenitors and sovereigns of the earth and who create and sustain this world through successive long period of time called 'Kalpas'. The first such mythical progenitor is known as 'Manu Svayambhu' as the one who sprung (created or manifested) from the self-existent Brahma. He is regarded as a secondary creator who commenced his work of creating by producing 10 Prajāpatis, of whom the first was 'Light' called Māricī. To this Manu is ascribed the celebrated code of conduct called 'Manu Smṛti' and two other ancient Sūtra work on Kalpa and Gṛhya, i.e. the sacrificial and domestic rituals. He is also known as Hiraṇyagarbha and Pracetās.

The other 5 Manus are called Svarociṣa, Uttama, Tāmas, Raivata and Cākṣuṣa. The 7 Manu is called Vaivasvata Manu, the son of the Son-God, and he is regarded as the progenitor of the present race of living beings. He is like the Noah of the Old Testament of the Holy Bible, is said to have been preserved by Viṣṇu or Brahma in the form of the legendary great fish from being drowned in the great deluge of the dooms day. This Manu is also called as one of the 12 Ādityas, the author of Ṛg Veda, VIII, 27-31, as the brother of Yama (the God of death and a judge of a creature's deeds done by it during the life time), as the founder and first king of Ayodhyā, and as the father of Ila who married the son of the Moon-God named Budha. This makes two great dynasties—the solar and the lunar races to which Śrī Rāma and Kṛṣṇa respectively belonged—related to each other. The 8 Manu, or the 1 of the future Manus according to Vāyu Purāṇa, III, 2, will be Sāvarṇī, the 9 would be Dakṣa Sāvarṇī, the 10 would be Brahma Sāvarṇī, the 11 would be Dharma Sāvarṇī the 12 would be Rudra Sāvarṇī, the 13 would be Ravīya or Deva Sāvarṇī, and the 14 would be Bhautya or Indra Sāvarṇī. The life of one Manu is equivalent to roughly 311,040,000 years.

(ii) The creation of 'rain by the Sun' is a very scientific phenomenon. The sun creates heat which evaporates the water from the oceans. This evaporated water goes inland with the hot air currents formed due to the heat on the land surface. Eventually, this moisture-laden wind forms the clouds which pour rain upon the earth. The sun controls this cycle of rainfall and seasons by a complex mechanism of heat, light, convection air currents, gravitational pulls, rotation of the earth on its axis and its revolution around the sun, and other such forces of nature.]

योऽप्यशेषजगच्छास्ता शक्रः सर्वामरेश्वरः ।।20।।
यज्ञानां फलदो देवो वर्ततेऽसौ मदाज्ञया। यः प्रशास्ता ह्यसाधूनां वर्तते नियमादिह।।21।।

yo'pyaśeṣajagacchāstā śakraḥ sarvāmareśvaraḥ //
yajñānāṃ phalado devo vartate'sau madājñayā /
yaḥ praśāstā hyasādhūnāṃ vartate niyamādiha //

Lord Indra, known as 'Śakra', who rules over the whole creation (because he is the patron God of rains which foster life on the planet) and is the Lord (king) of all the Gods, distributes the rewards and benefits of doing various 'Yajñas' (fire sacrifices and other religious rituals) only upon my instructions, advise and authority (20). Similarly, he administers punishment and restrains the unrighteous and evil ones according to the rules framed by me (21). [20-21]

यमो वैवस्वतो देवी देवदेवनियोगतः। योऽपि सर्वधनाध्यक्षो धनानां सम्प्रदायकः।।22।।
सोऽपीश्वरनियोगेन कुबेरो वर्तते सदा। यः सर्व रक्षसां नाथस्तापसानां फलप्रदाः।।23।।

yamo vaivasvato devī devadevaniyogataḥ /
yo'pi sarvadhanādhyakṣo dhanānāṃ sampradāyakaḥ //
so'pīśvaraniyogena kubero vartate sadā /
yaḥ sarva rakṣasāṃ nāthastāpasānāṃ phalapradāḥ //

'Yama' (the God who decides whether the creature goes to hell or heaven depending upon the deeds done by it during its previous life; the God of death), the Vaivasvata Manu, the different Gods and Goddesses—all of them function under my instructions, authority, command and guidance according to the laws and regulations that I have formulated or framed for this purpose. He who is the Lord of wealth and has the powers to give it to others in the society (22), i.e. the patron God of wealth called Kubera who is the treasurer of Gods, also always exercises his powers and discretion upon the express instruction of the supreme Lord, that is me. He (Kubera) is the Lord of all the demons and gives commensurate rewards to those who do severe Tapa (i.e. austerities and penances) (23). [22-23]

[Note :—(i) 'Vaivasvat or Vaivasvata Manu' is the 7 Manu and the legendary progenitor of the current living beings on this earth. See a detailed not to verse no. 19-19½ above in this Canto. The word 'Vaivasvata' means coming from the Sun or belonging to the Sun, or relating to or belonging to Yama (the God of death and a judge of a creature's deeds done by it during the life time). It also means the planet Saturn as well as one of the Rudras. In the present context of this text, Śrī Rāma means the Vaivasvata Manu who is the forefather of the human race in general and Śrī Rāma's ancestor in particular because he belongs to the Solar race.

(ii) Kubera—he is the treasure of Gods, a grand son of sage Pulastya, the elder step-brother of the demon king Rāvaṇa made famous by the story of Rāmāyaṇa. Since Rāvaṇa was a king of the demon race and Kubera was his elder brother, naturally therefore Kubera is considered as the senior most amongst the demons. According to legend, Kubera was the rightful king of Laṅkā before Rāvaṇa got jealous of him, usurped the kingdom from his brother and even snatched his famous airplane, Puṣpaka, upon which Śrī Rāma had returned to Ayodhyā after slaying Rāvaṇa at the end of the epic war at Laṅkā. The whole episode of the birth, acquiring of the kingdom and defeat of Kubera at the hands of Rāvaṇa have been described in 'Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa' by sage Veda Vyāsa in its Uttara Kāṇḍa, Canto 1, verse no. 24 to Canto 2, verse no. 60. A separate English version of this Rāmāyaṇa by this author has been published.]

मन्नियोगादसौ देवो वर्तते निर्ऋतिः सदा। वैतालगणभूतानां स्वामी भोगफलप्रदः ।।24।।

manniyogādasau devo vartate nirṛtiḥ sadā /
vaitālagaṇabhūtānāṃ svāmī bhogaphalapradaḥ //

The God called 'Nirṛti' (he is one of the names of Lord Śiva who is the patron God of phantoms, ghosts and spirits) also always performs his duties according to the principles laid down by me, and functions under my command and authority. He is the Lord of all the phantoms, spirits and ghosts, and he gives them all the rewards of the deeds done by them (24).

ईशानः सर्वभक्तानां सोऽपि तिष्ठेन्ममाज्ञया। यो वामदेवोऽङ्गिरसः शिष्यो रुद्रगणाग्रणीः ।।25।।
रक्षको योगिनां नित्यं वर्ततेऽसौ मदाज्ञया ।। 25½ ।।

īśānaḥ sarvabhaktānāṃ so'pi tiṣṭhenmamājñayā /
yo vāmadevo'ṅgirasaḥ śiṣyo rudragaṇāgraṇīḥ //
rakṣako yogināṃ nityaṃ vartate'sau madājñayā /

The great Lord who stands as the most exalted and revered symbol or emblem of devotion which all the worshippers of the supreme Lord are expected to possess, is called 'Īśāna' (Lord Śiva). He is also established by my express command and orders and on my authority. 'Vāmadeva', who is the chief amongst the eleven Rudras, along with sage 'Aṅgirās' accompanied by all his disciples, are always protective of the Yogīs (ascetics). They also work and carry out their assigned duties under my instructions, command and authority (25-25½).

[Note :—(i) The word 'Īśāna' has the following connotations—(i) Lord master, (ii) Lord Śiva, (iii) the north-east corner or direction of the globe, and (iv) an emblem, symbol or an insignia. (v) Here, the chief Rudra is called Īśāna because he represents all the 11 Rudras, he is a symbol for all of them at once, and he is also the greatest devotee of Lord Viṣṇu who is now in the form of Śrī Rāma. Just like the situation when a king follows anyone who is senior or superior to him, by saying that Īśāna, who is the chief Rudra himself, obeys Lord Śrī Rāma, it is implied that Śrī Rāma is senior to Lord Śiva and other Rudras, and all of them obey his commands. That is why Lord Śiva is also known as the first God who had composed the story of Śrī Rāma in his heart and narrated it to Pārvatī, his divine consort, when she requested him to reveal the story to dispel all doubts and misconceptions about the divinity of Śrī Rāma.

(ii) The name of the 11 Rudras have been given in note to verse no. 18-21 of Canto 9.

(iii) Lord Śiva is regarded as the patron God of Yogīs or ascetics, hermits and recluses who spend the time in meditation and doing fire sacrifices, especially those who live around cremation grounds and rub the ash of the fire sacrificial pit on their bodies and hold a trident. Since Lord Śiva is also the annihilator and resides in the cremation ground, he is deemed to be a patron God of spirits, phantoms and ghosts, and as such is surrounded by them as described in verse no. 24 above.

(iv) Sage Aṅgirā's chief disciples are his own three sons—Bṛhaspati, Utathya and Samvartta.]

यश्च सर्वजगत्पूज्ये वर्तते विघ्नकारकः ।।26।।
विनायको धर्मनेता सोऽपि मद्वचनात्किल। योऽपि वेदविदा श्रेष्ठो देवसेनापतिः प्रभुः ।।27।।
स्कन्दोऽसौ वर्तते नित्यं स्वयम्भूप्रतिचोदितः ।। 27½ ।।

yaśca sarvajagatpūjye vartate vighnakārakaḥ //
vināyako dharmanetā so'pi madvacanātkila /
yo'pi vedavidā śreṣṭho devasenāpatiḥ prabhuḥ //
skando'sau vartate nityaṃ svayambhūpraticoditaḥ //

He who is worshipped, honoured, glorified and revered by the whole world, is the dispeller or vanquisher of all hindrances or obstacles to success in any venture or endeavour in this world, and is the foremost leader of Dharma in the world (i.e. he leads those who have the virtues of righteousness, nobility and exemplary qualities), is known as 'Vināyaka' (Lord Gaṇeśa who is the elephant-headed God worshipped first amongst all other Gods). He too undertakes all his functions as per the guidelines set out by me, works under my direction and supervision, and carries out my instructions under the powers delegated to him under my authority (26½).

He who is an expert in the Vedas (i.e. is thoroughly versed in the tenets as laid down in the Vedas, and is therefore most wise, erudite, learned, scholarly and sagacious) and is the best commander of the armed forces of the Gods, known as God 'Skanda', also constantly works under the inspiration of the Lord God himself, or under the instruction and supervision and according to the powers delegated to him by the authority of Lord Svayambhu (27½). [26-27½]

[Note :—(i) 'Vināyaka' is also known as Lord Gaṇeśa, the son of Lord Śiva and Pārvatī. He is said to be the wisest and most honoured of the Hindu Gods and is always worshipped in the beginning of any endeavour or enterprise, whether it pertains to the mundane worldly affairs or to the spiritual realm. This is done to invoke his blessings which preempt any evil forces from throwing a spanner in the wheel of the successful completion of the exercise. (ii) Lord Svayambhu has been described in detail in a note to verse nos. 19-19½ above in this Canto. (iii) The word 'Skanda' refers to someone who attacks; one who jumps, leaps or hops swiftly and with agility. It also refers to Kartikeya, the son of Lord Śiva or of Agni (the Fire-God). He is called the God of War as a leader of Śiva's ghosts against the enemies of the Gods.]

ये च प्रजानां पतयो मरीच्याद्या महर्षयः ।।28।।
सृजन्ति विविधं लोकं परस्यैव नियोगतः ।। 28½।।

ye ca prajānāṃ patayo marīcyādyā maharṣayaḥ //
sṛjanti vividhaṃ lokaṃ parasyaiva niyogataḥ /

Great sages Marīcī and others, who are the Lords of the creation and its inhabitant creatures (or literally the masters, guardians and the guides of the subjects of the creation of Brahmā, the creator), carryout the functions of creating and regulating the various Lokas (worlds) under the powers and authority delegated to them by the supreme Lord. [That is, they have been appointed by the supreme Lord, Brahmā, and directed to look after the welfare of his creation. Since they have been deployed on the command of the Lord, they carryout his orders, under his name and seal, as it were.] (28-28½)

[Note :—'Maricī' was one of the first progenitors of the creation called Prajāpati. He is the patron God of light. In ancient times, those sages who conceptualised the scriptures described the various divine forces that regulated the creation by ascribing them the role of a great seer or sage. So, sage Māricī is the patron God of light and one of the 10 Prajāpatis first created by Brahmā and he was the forefather of creation. Like his other compatriot Prajāpatis, he was responsible to look after the creation under the authority of Brahmā. He was like one of the chief guardians of the subjects of Brahmā, the Supreme Being and Authority of this creation.]

या व श्री सर्वभूतानां ददाति विपुलां श्रियम्।।29।।
पत्नी नारायणस्यासौ वर्तते मदनुग्रहात्।। 29½।।
yā va śrī sarvabhūtānāṃ dadāti vipulāṃ śriyam //
patnī nārāyaṇasyāsau vartate madanugrahāt /

The Goddess Lakṣmī who provides ample amounts of all the worldly wealth and treasures, prosperity and welfare, pomp and pelf, majesty and glitter to all the mortal beings of the world, and who is the divine consort of Lord Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu), does so because of my gracious kindness, my benevolence and my magnanimity towards the creation. (29-29½)

[Note :—That is, the largesse that the Goddess of wealth, prosperity and wellbeing, Goddess Lakṣmī, shows to the people in the form of giving away wealth, prosperity and riches leading to materialistic comfort and welfare and wellbeing of all the creatures of the world are actually my gifts for them, and I have appointed her or have delegated to her this job of benediction and magnanimity for the sake of the creatures; she acts on my behalf; she gets what she gives because I give to her; she cannot give anything if I do not want her to give. Hence, it is 'me' (Viṣṇu in the form of Śrī Rāma and who is the Lord God and Supreme Being of this creation) who has provided Lakṣmī with the worldly treasures with the welfare of the human kind in view.]

वाचं ददाति विपुलां या च देवी सरस्वती।।30।।
सापीश्वरनियोगेन चोदिता सम्प्रवर्तते।। 30½।।
vācaṃ dadāti vipulāṃ yā ca devī sarasvatī //
sāpīśvaraniyogena coditā sampravartate /

That Goddess Sarasvatī, who empowers the faculty of speech with ample glory, vitality, majesty, prowess and strength, also carries out the divine mission of the supreme Lord known as Īśvara. She is inspired by him to become active, agile and potent. [That is, the Goddess of wisdom, erudition and scholarship helps a man to become learned and be a good orator and teacher because I want it to be so. Goddess Sarasvatī cannot make anyone wise and scholarly and be renowned as an expert speaker and scholar par excellence if I do not want him to be so.] (30-30½)

याऽशेष पुरुषान् घोरान्नरकात्तारयत्यपि ।।31।।
सावित्री संस्मृता देवी देवाज्ञानुविधायिनी ।। 31½ ।।
yā'śeṣa puruṣān ghorānnarakāttārayatyapi //
sāvitrī saṃsmṛtā devī devājñānuvidhāyinī /

The Goddess Savitrī, who provides liberation and deliverance to countless persons from a horrible hell and who is remembered and invoked for this aptitude and virtue, is also regulated by the edicts of the Lord God. She provides liberation and deliverance in accordance with the principles and guidelines laid down by the supreme Lord, and not according to her own sweet will or whims. She merely carries out the laws of the Lord as laid down and advised by him (31-31½).

[Note :—The word 'Savitrī' has many connotations—(i) she is the mother of all the Vedas and the wife of Brahmā, the creator, (ii) Sarasvatī, the Goddess of wisdom, knowledge, erudition and speech, (iii) the wife of Dharma and the daughter of Prajāpati Dakṣa, (iv) a chaste women, (v) river Yamunā, and (vi) Mother Nature, Prakṛti, personified.]

पार्वती परमा देवी ब्रह्मविद्याप्रदायिनी ।।32।।
यापि ध्याता विशेषेण सापि मद्वचनानुगा ।। 32½ ।।
pārvatī paramā devī brahmavidyāpradāyinī //
yāpi dhyātā viśeṣeṇa sāpi madvacanānugā /

The supreme Goddess Pārvatī (the divine consort of Lord Śiva and regarded as the great mother of creation), who has promulgated the great ordinance pertaining to the knowledge of Brahmā, gives the necessary special rewards to those who contemplate and meditate upon Brahmā, according to my wishes and for my pleasure. [That is, the rewards that one gets by doing contemplation and meditation are given to him by me, albeit through the medium of this great Goddess Pārvatī.] (32-32½]

योऽनन्तो महिमानन्तः शेषोऽशेषामरः प्रभुः ।।33।।
दधाति शिरसा लोकं सोऽपि देवनियोगतः ।। 33½ ।।
yo'nanto mahimānantaḥ śeṣo'śeṣāmaraḥ prabhuḥ //
dadhāti śirasā lokaṃ so'pi devaniyogataḥ /

Lord Śeṣanātha (the legendary hooded python on whose coiled body Lord Viṣṇu, the Virāṭ Puruṣa, reclines on the celestial ocean of milk called Kṣīrasāgara), whose stupendous and magnificent glory, potentials, majesty and fame has no end or measure and who is also the eternal and supreme Lord of all the Gods, carries the burden of the earth on his hoods or head also on the instructions and directions of the supreme Lord, because the Lord has appointed him for the job of carrying aloft the earth on his head and preventing it from drowning in the celestial ocean (33-33½).

योऽग्निः संवर्तको नित्यं वडवारूपसंस्थितः ।।34।।
पिबत्यखिलमम्भोधिमीश्वरस्य नियोगतः ।। 34½ ।।
yo'gniḥ saṃvartako nityaṃ vaḍavārūpasaṃsthitaḥ //
pibatyakhilamambhodhimīśvarasya niyogataḥ /

That annihilating eternal fire called 'Vāḍva' that always burns under the entire ocean (i.e. is always present in the ocean bed and keeps the water warm), literally devours or drinks it under the command and authority of the great Lord (34-34½).

> [Note :—The great fire burning on the floor of the ocean, a reference to the underground volcanic activity that occasionally erupts as spouts of hot gas escaping from the ocean bed as well as the innate fire present in the bosom of the earth in its core, keeps the water of the ocean or the sea always warm and it heats it up sufficiently enough to make it evaporate constantly. Otherwise, with all the rivers flowing and pouring themselves into the ocean or the sea, they would have risen in volume and over the centuries would have submerged the land mass by now. The existence of this under-ocean or under-sea fire is evident in the warmth of the water deep under the surface of the ocean or the sea as it sustains a complete ecosystem of marine creatures even though the surface may be frigid cold and solidified as glaciers and icebergs.]

आदित्या वसवो रुद्रा मरुतश्च तथाश्विनी ।।35।।
अन्याश्च देवताः सर्वा मच्छासनमधिष्ठिताः ।। 35½ ।।
ādityā vasavo rudrā marutaśca tathāśvinī //
anyāśca devatāḥ sarvā macchāsanamadhiṣṭhitāḥ /

Āditya (the Sun-God), Vasus (the patron Gods of various forms of wealth that sustain material life on this earth), Rudra (the various forms of Śiva), Maruts (the different Wind-Gods) Aśvinī Kumāras (the medicine men of the Gods) and all other Gods are invariable subjected to my reign and authority. That is, all the Gods stay regulated by me (35-35½).

[Note :—(i) The names of the Ādityas, Rudras and Vasus are given in Canto 9, verse no. 18-21. (ii) The various Maruts have been described in Canto 12, verse 18 and its note. (iii) Aśvinī Kumāras are the two sons of the Sun-God; their mother was Prabhā who is the daughter of Tvaṣṭā. They are doctors for the Gods.]

गन्धर्वा उरगा यक्षाः सिद्धाः साध्याश्च चारणाः ।।36।।
भूतरक्षः पिशाचाश्च स्थितः शास्त्रे स्वयम्भुव।। 36½।।
gandharvā uragā yakṣāḥ siddhāḥ sādhyāśca cāraṇāḥ //
bhūtarakṣaḥ piśācāśca sthitaḥ śāstre svayambhuva /

'Gandharvas' (celestial musicians), 'Uragas' (the legendary serpents and other reptiles), 'Yakṣas' (semi-Gods who guard the treasure of Kubera, the treasurer of Gods), 'Siddhas' (mystics, the attained ones), 'Cāraṇas' (celestial bards and minstrels), 'Bhūtas' (ghosts, phantoms and spirits), 'Rākṣasas' (the non-Gods; demons), 'Piśācas' (devil, ogres, evil phantoms and vampires, spooks, Śaitāna, fiends)—all of them are under the control and command of Lord Svayambhu (36-36½).

[Note :—Lord Svayambhu has been described in detail in a note to verse nos. 19-19½ of this Canto.]

कलाकाष्ठानिमेषाश्च मुहूर्ता दिवसाः क्षणाः ।।37।।
ऋत्वब्दमासपक्षाश्च स्थितः शास्त्रे प्रजापते। युगमन्वन्तराण्येव ममतिष्ठन्ति शासने।।38।।
kalākāṣṭhānimeṣāśca muhūrtā divasāḥ kṣaṇāḥ //
ṛtvabdamāsapakṣāśca sthitaḥ śāstre prajāpate /
yugamanvantarāṇyeva mamatiṣṭhanti śāsane //

The various sections or fractions of time, such as 'Kalā' (a measurement of time equivalent to 30 Kāṣṭhā or 12960 seconds = 231 minutes), 'Kāṣṭhā' (a period of time of 18 Puls, where 1 Pula = 24 seconds; hence 432 seconds, or 7.2 minutes), 'Nimeṣa' (the time taken for the involuntary blinking of the eyelid; an instant, a fraction of a second), 'Muhūrta' (the 30 part of a day), 'Divasa' (the day time; 12

hours), 'Kṣaṇa' (moment), the different seasons, the month and the years, a period of 15 days of the lunar cycle called 'Pakṣa', 'Yuga' (an era or age), 'Manvantara' (a period of seventy one 4-era cycles, each cycle having the 4 eras called Sat, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali Yugas; a period equivalent to 14 part of one day of Brahmā, the creator)—all of them are regulated and controlled by my authority and are administered by me (37-38).

[Note :—In brief it signifies that whatever his happening in any point of time in this creation, whether that time is as small as a fraction of a second or as unimaginably huge as a Manvantara and Kalpas, everything is regulated by the supreme Lord. The various seasons, the days and the nights, the cycle of the moon and the revolution of the earth around the sun to mark the year—all are controlled by the Lord.]

पराश्चैव पराद्धाश्च कालभेदास्तथापरे। चतुर्विधानि भूतानि स्थावराणि चराणि च।।39।।
नियोगादेव वर्तते सर्वाण्येव स्वयम्भुवः। पतनानि च सर्वाणि भुवनानि च शासनात्।।40।।

parāścaiva parārddhāśca kālabhedāstathāpare /
caturvidhāni bhūtāni sthāvarāṇi carāṇi ca //
niyogādeva vartate sarvāṇyeva svayambhuvaḥ /
patanāni ca sarvāṇi bhuvanāni ca śāsanāt //

The supernatural realm of the transcendental entity that extends to virtual infinity as well as the period of time which is equivalent to half the life of Brahmā, all the different aspects of time or circumstances, all the four forms of the mortal creatures, all the inanimate and animate world—each and everyone of them is controlled and regulated by Lord Svayambhu (described in note of verse no. 19½). Everything acts or moves according to his wishes and orders and as directed by him. The nether world (or the lower, subterranean world) and all other worlds obey his inviolable orders and are under his administration, command and control. All obey him without fail (39-40).

[Note :—The four types of creatures mentioned in verse no. 39 are the following—(i) 'Aṇḍaja' (those born from an egg, e.g. birds; (ii) 'Svedaja' (those born from sweat and dampness, e.g. bacteria, fungi and lice; (iii) 'Udbhija' (those born from seeds, e.g. plants; and (iv) 'Jarāyuj' (those born from an embryo inside the womb, e.g. a man).]

ब्रह्माण्डानि च वर्तते देवस्य परमात्मनः। अतीतान्यप्ससंख्यानि ब्रह्माण्डानि महाज्ञया।।41।।
प्रवृत्तानि पदार्थौघैः सहितानि समं ततः। ब्रह्माण्डानि भविष्यन्ति सह वस्तुभिरात्मगैः।।42।।

brahmāṇḍāni ca vartate devasya paramātmanaḥ /
atītānyapsasaṃkhyāni brahmāṇḍāni mahājñayā //
pravṛttāni padārthaughaiḥ sahitāni samaṃ tataḥ /
brahmāṇḍāni bhaviṣyanti saha vastubhirātmagaiḥ //

Innumerable endless universes work under the command and control of that Supreme Being called Parmātmā (literally, the supreme, transcendental Soul; but here also meaning the stupendous forces of nature which regulate everything that exists). All the universes have their own characteristic features, their own basic elements in their myriad forms, in different and multiferious permutations and combination, and have their own ecosystems. (But they work and are controlled by that singular authority called Parmātmā) (42).

[Note :—Modern science has established that our solar system is not the only one and neither the earth the only one of its kind. There are countless number of galaxies in the cosmos, each galaxy having its own ecosystem of stars and their planets. The process of creation and destruction is continuously going on with some old stars dying thousands of light years away and newer ones are under formative stages somewhere else. It is such a great wonder that our ancient sages who composed the epics as well as the Vedas, Upaniṣads and Purāṇas could envision such stupendous phenomena in their minds without the benefit of complex scientific gadgetry.]

हरिष्यन्ति सहैवाज्ञां परस्य परमात्मनः। भूमिरापोऽनलो वायुः खं मनो बुद्धिरेव च।।43।।
भूतादिरादिप्रकृतिर्नियोगान्मम वर्तते।। 43½ ।।

hariṣyanti sahaivājñāṃ parasya paramātmanaḥ /
bhūmirāpo'nalo vāyuḥ khaṃ mano buddhireva ca //
bhūtādirādiprakṛtirniyogānmama vartate /

All of them accept and carryout most cheerfully and gladly the orders and commands of the supreme Lord. The elements such as the earth, water, fire, wind and space or sky (which are called the gross body of the creatures in this creation) as well as the 'Mana' (mind), 'Buddhi' (intellect) and 'Prakṛti' (the natural habits, temperaments and inclinations) of a creature (which together form its subtle and causal body) are all subject to my authority and command. They do their assigned duties as I have appointed them to carry on with the routine work of the creation independently, without my day to day interference (43-43½).

याऽशेषसर्वजगतां मोहिनीं सर्वदेहिनाम्।।44।।
मायापि वर्तते नित्यं सापीश्वरनियोगतः।। 44½।।

yā'śeṣasarvajagatāṃ mohinīṃ sarvadehinām //
māyāpi vartate nityaṃ sāpīśvaraniyogataḥ /

'Māyā', the factor in creation that creates delusions and deceptions leading to hallucinations and misconceptions about the Truth, thereby trapping the entire world and its inhabitants (i.e. the mortal creatures) in its net, also constantly works under the orders and command of the supreme Lord. [That is, Māyā has been delegated these powers to create delusions and illusions under the authority of the Lord. The Lord thought it necessary to have these negative traits in this creation, because they were needed to counter balance the positive virtues. Both the negative and the positive, the bad and the good, were necessary to make the world a composite whole.] (44-44½)

[Note :—The concept of 'Māyā' has been described in detail as a note to verse no. 35 canto 25 of this book]

विधूय मोहकलिलं यथा पश्यति तत्पदम्।।45।।
सापि विद्या महेशस्य नियोगाद्वशवर्तिनी। बहुनात्र किमुक्तेन मम शक्त्यात्मकं जगत्।।46।।

vidhūya mohakalilaṃ yathā paśyati tatpadam //
sāpi vidyā maheśasya niyogādvaśavartinī /
bahunātra kimuktena mama śaktyātmakaṃ jagat //

That by which 'Moha' (i.e. ignorance and delusions leading to hallucinations, bewilderments, infatuations and attachments, misconception and deception about the Truth and Reality) is dispelled and the supreme and truthful reality is perceived and realised, is known as 'Vidyā' (i.e. truthful knowledge, erudition, wisdom, sagacity and enlightenment). This Vidyā also functions under the command and control of the great Lord known as Maheśa (literally, the great Lord Śiva). What is the use of saying much, this whole world is empowered by me, is driven by me, is enabled by me, is activated and moved by me, and is an embodiment or image of my stupendous potentials and magnificent majesty (45-46).

मयैव पूर्यते विश्वं मय्यैव प्रलयं व्रजेत्। अहंहि भगवानीशः स्वयंज्योतिः सनातनः।।47।।

mayaiva pūryate viśvaṃ mayyaiva pralayaṃ vrajet /
ahaṃhi bhagavānīśaḥ svayaṃjyotiḥ sanātanaḥ //

This whole world attains its zenith of accomplishment by my grace, and it is in me that it finally dissolves or merges into (see also Canto 15, verse no. 7). I am the one who is known as Lord 'Īśa' or Īśvara (the causal body of vedānta) who is self illuminated, radiant, splendorous and glorious as well as eternal, universal and truthful (47).

परमात्मा परंब्रह्म मत्तो ह्यन्यन्न विद्यते। इत्येतत्परमं ज्ञानं भवेत कथितं मया।।48।।

paramātmā paraṃbrahma matto hyanyanna vidyate/
ityetatparamaṃ jñānaṃ bhaveta kathitaṃ mayā//

I am Parmātmā, the supreme, transcendental, cosmic soul of creation. I am the supreme Brahma. No one is superior to or greater than me. I have told you (Hanumāna) the ultimate Truth and absolute Reality as it stands (48).

ज्ञात्वा विमुच्यते जन्तुर्जन्म संसारबन्धनात्। मायामाश्रित्य जातोऽहं गृहे दशरथस्य हि।।49।।

jñātvā vimucyate janturjanma saṃsārabandhanāt/
māyāmāśritya jāto'haṃ gṛhe daśarathasya hi//

By having this supreme knowledge, a creature is freed from the fetters of birth (and death) that this world of artificiality creates for him to tie him down to it. I have taken a birth in the household of Daśaratha under the spell and influence of Māyā (as defined in verse no. 44 above and in verse no. 35 of canto 25 of this book)[1].(49)

[1] [Note :—Though I am the enlightened Supreme Being of this creation and am beyond any taint, blemish and reproach, when I decided to reveal myself in a visible form as a human being, I had to take the recourse of deceptions so as to hide my true identity and assume a physical form of a man with all its incumbent faults, flaws and shortcomings. But what you see is an illusionary form of the truthful supreme Brahma. Further, if the supremely enlightened Being that is me can be affected by Māyā, there is no wonder than that an ordinary man is effected by the stupendous powers of Māyā. It is not his fault that he is under its spell, but he should endeavour to overcome it by trying to understand the truth behind the façade of deception and try to achieve to realisation of his true self, his Ātmā through the process of Yoga (meditation) as elucidated by me in canto 14. If he achieves success in doing so, he would deem to have broken the fetters that tie him down to this artificial and illusionary mundane world, and to have achieved deliverance and liberation from its shackles.]

रामोऽहं लक्ष्मणो ह्येष शत्रुघ्नो भारतोऽपि च। चतुर्धा सम्प्रभूतोऽहं कथितं तेऽनिलात्मज।।50।।
मायास्वरूपं च तव कथितं यत्प्लवङ्गम। कृपया तद्धृदा धार्यं न विस्मर्तव्यमेव हि।।51।।

rāmo'haṃ lakṣmaṇo hyeṣa śatrughno bhārato'pi ca /
caturdhā samprabhūto'haṃ kathitaṃ te'nilātmaja //
māyāsvarūpaṃ ca tava kathitaṃ yatplavaṃgama /
kṛpayā taddhṛdā dhāryaṃ na vismartavyameva hi //

I have manifested or revealed myself and assumed four forms known as Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Śatrughna and Bharata. All these four physical forms are none other than 'me'. These are all my illusionary or deceptive forms. Oh the son of the Wind-God ! Whatever I have told you, please keep it in your heart with respect and devotion, and do not ever forget it (50-51).

येनायं पठ्यते नित्यं संवादो भवतो मम। जीवन्मुक्तो भवेत्सोऽपि सर्वपापैः प्रमुच्यते।।52।।

yenāyaṃ paṭhyate nityaṃ saṃvādo bhavato mama /
jīvanmukto bhavetso'pi sarvapāpaiḥ pramucyate //

Those who would daily read this conversation between me (extending from Canto 11 to Canto 14) would be freed from the fetters of this mundane life to become liberated and emancipated, i.e. they would become 'Jīvana Mukta'. They would also get rid of all their sins and misdeeds (i.e. they will be able to overcome the evil effects of these misdeeds and misdemeanours) (52).

[Note :—The word 'Jīvana Mukta' means that such persons will become emancipated even thought they are still living in this world. They would become enlightened, wise and realised, and Māyā or delusion and ignorance would no more have any effect on them.

The concept of 'Jīvana Mukta' has been described by other scriptures in the following way—(a) According to Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 4/4/7, 'When all the desires present in one's heart are eliminated, then such a mortal being becomes immortal and attains Brahma in this body itself why he is still alive'; (b) According to Viveka Cūḍāmaṇī, 543, 'A Jīvana Mukta person is one who remains ever contented though he has no riches; he is very strong, potent and powerful though helpless and without support; he is perpetually satisfied though he does not enjoy the sense objects of comfort in this world; he treats everyone equally though he is without an exemplar'; (c) According to Viveka Cūḍāmaṇī, 544, 'A Jīvana Mukta person is he who remains inactive (uninvolved) though doing everything; he remains untouched by the fruits of past actions though witnessing and experiencing them (i.e. he remains unaffected and unruffled); he does not identify himself with his body though he possess one'; (d) According to Laghu (minor) Yoga Vasiṣṭha, 5/93, 'He is called a Jīvana Mukta who, though buffeted by such emotions as love, hate, fear and the like, remains unaffected and pure and spotless in his heart as the sky'. The concept has also been explained in detail by Śrī Rāma to Hanumāna in canto 1 of Muktikopaniṣad of Śukla Yajur Veda tradition. This Upaniṣad's English version is included in this author's book 'an anthology of Śrī Rāma's Upaniṣads'].

श्रावयेद्वा द्विजाञ्छुद्धान्ब्रह्मचर्यपरायणान्। यो वा विचारयेदर्थ स याति परमां गतिम्।।53।।
śrāvayedvā dvijāñchuddhānbrahmacaryaparāyaṇān /
yo vā vicārayedartha sa yāti paramāṃ gatim //

Those who narrate it or preach about it to Brāhmins (or learned and wise people) who observe Brahmācarya, or those who contemplate upon and discuss about the profound meaning and import of my discourse for you, shall attain the supreme and most exalted end that a creature can expect to acquire, a state called 'Parama Pada' which is tantamount to having emancipation and salvation (53).

[Note :—The word 'Brahmacarya' here refers to self restraint, abstinence from indulgences and leading a regulated life. The term is usually used to define the first phase of life when a man is a student, studying the scriptures under the tutelage of a wise and learned teacher. Those who are grown up but remain steadfast and resolute in their vows of keeping self restraint on passions, worldly pursuits and various indulgences, they are also deemed to be Brahmacārīs following the principles of Brahmacarya, although they might be living the life of a householder. This Brahmacarya infuses a man with divine energy and he becomes eligible and competent to pursue spiritual and religious life which is quite different from the materialist and sensual life of this mundane materialistic world. Such persons are only eligible to learn about the supreme Truth of existence, about the Ātmā and supreme Brahma, for otherwise they will only subject these great principles to ridicule and scorn.]

यश्चैतच्छृणुयान्नित्यं भक्तियुक्तो दृढवतः। सर्वपापविनिर्मुक्तो ब्रह्म लोके महीयते।।54।।
yaścaitacchṛṇuyānnityaṃ bhaktiyukto dṛḍhrvataḥ /
sarvapāpavinirmukto brahma loke mahīyate //

Those who would listen to it daily with devotion, reverence and sincerity as well as with firm faith and steadfast conviction shall become freed from the tarnish of all sins and misdeed. They shall attain the supreme abode of Brahma in the heaven, called Brahma Loka (after death) (54).

[Note :—We must note that this type of emancipation and salvation in which the devotee reaches Brahma Loka is different from the one mentioned in verse no. 52 when he becomes 'Jīvana Mukta'. Verse no. 53 says that such a person attains the Parama Pada, which is the most exalted stature of attaining the holy, divine and august feet of the Supreme Being. While Jīvana Mukta is a person who is still alive but has become enlightened and emancipated, after death he attains Parama Pada of the Lord in the Brahma Loka. The different types of Muktis (emancipation and salvation) have been elaborately described by Śrī Rāma to Hanumāna in Muktikopaniṣad of Śukla Yajur Veda]

तस्मात्सर्वप्रत्येन पठितव्यो मनीषिभिः। श्रोतव्यश्चापि मन्तव्यो विशेषाद्ब्राह्मणैः सदा॥55॥

tasmātsarvapratyena paṭhitavyo manīṣibhiḥ /
śrotavyaścāpi mantavyo viśeṣādbrāhmaṇaiḥ sadā //

That is why, those who are learned, wise, sagacious and enlightened should make all efforts to read and study and preach and discuss my discourse and contemplate upon it. Brāhmins (the wise and learned people) should specially pay attention to it and hear it with devotion, conviction and faith (55).

Thus ends Canto 14 of the ancient epic called Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa written by sage Vālmīki describing the concluding part of Śrī Rāma's preaching to Hanumāna in which the Lord describes his supreme, transcendental, sublime divine form as the almighty Authority in creation.

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Canto 15
Hanumāna's prayer to Śrī Rāma

In this Canto, sage Vālmīki describes the glorious Stotras, the devotional hymns that Hanumāna had composed extempore to honour and prey to his Lord Śrī Rāma. The prayer in essence sums up the glories of Śrī Rāma in his primary form as Brahma, the macrocosmic supreme and transcendental Being and Lord of the creation. It also summarises what Śrī Rāma himself has described about his eclectic, sublime and transcendental form in the previous canto nos. 11-14.

These prayerful hymns contain elements of devotion as well as metaphysics, theology, spiritualism and Vedānta.

Prayers or hymns are mental thoughts that sprout spontaneously in the heart and mind of a devotee. They express his emotions and thoughts. Sincere prayers are those that come from the heart as well as from the mind, thereby having the elements of both in them—sentimental emotions and intelligent thoughts. According to Ādi Śaṅkarācārya, the hymns or Mantras are 'Saṅkalpas' (thoughts) of the mind because they are said exactly as they appear in the mind with the formation of a particular set of words that form the text of the prayer said in a particular accent and pitch of the voice, and with a particular effort.

ध्यात्वा हृदिस्थं प्रणिपत्य मूर्घ्ना बद्धाञ्जलिर्वायुसुतो महात्मा।
ओंकारमुच्चार्य विलोक्य देवमन्तः शरीरे निहितं गुहायाम्।। 1।।
dhyātvā hṛdisthaṃ praṇipatya mūrghnā baddhāñjalirvāyusuto mahātmā /
oṃkāramuccārya vilokya devamantaḥ śarīre nihitaṃ guhāyām //

The great son of the Wind-God meditated upon the divine form of Śrī Rāma in his heart and reverentially bowed his head before him. He joined his hands, invoked the divine word OM and beheld the Lord, who resides secretly and subtly in the cave-like dwelling of the heart of a creature (his devotees), standing in front of him (1).

रामं महात्मानम कुण्ठशक्तिं सनन्दमुख्यैः स्तुतमपमेयम्।
तुष्टाव च ब्रह्ममयैर्वचोभिरानन्दपूर्णयतमानसः सन्।। 2।।
rāmaṃ mahātmānama kuṇṭhaśaktiṃ sanandamukhyaiḥ stutamapameyam /
tuṣṭāva ca brahmamayairvacobhirānandapūrṇayatamānasaḥ san //

The great and exalted Śrī Rāma has immeasurable powers, potentials and strengths, is worshipped, adored, lauded and honoured by great sages, lead by Sananda as their chief, who sing the glories of the Lord who is 'Aprameya' (i.e. is endless, measureless, boundless, without parameter and beyond definition). Hanumāna praised the glories of the Lord most cheerfully and full of joy and exhilaration, with complete devotion in his heart, so much so that he became completely absorbed in it (i.e. while he was saying the prayers, he was submerged in a surge of devotion for the Lord). He used sublime, eclectic and divine words used to honour and pray to Brahmā while he prayed to the Lord Śrī Rāma (i.e. while he prayed to Śrī Rāma, he treated him as Brahmā) (2)

त्वामेकमीशं पुराणं प्राणेश्वरं राममनन्तयोगम्।
नमामि सर्वान्तरसन्निविष्टं प्रचेतसं ब्रह्ममयं पवित्रम्।। 3।।

tvāmekamīśaṃ purāṇaṃ prāṇeśvaraṃ rāmamanantayogam /
namāmi sarvāntarasanniviṣṭaṃ pracetasaṃ brahmamayaṃ pavitram //

'You are the only Lord who is supreme and exalted. You are the one who is lauded, honoured and glorified by the Purāṇas as the Lord of all life and souls. Oh Śrī Rāma, you are eternal and without an end; you are an embodiment of umpteen number of Yogas. You are established or enshrined in the bosom of all the creatures. You are the most exalted and pure conscious Brahmā. You are most pure, holy and uncorrupt. I bow to you most reverentially (3).

पश्यन्ति त्वां मुनयो ब्रह्मयोनि दान्ताः शान्ता विमलं रुक्मवर्णम्।
ध्यात्वात्मस्थमचलं स्वे शरीरे कवि परेभ्यः परमं परञ्च।। 4।।

paśyanti tvāṃ munayo brahmayoni
dāntāḥ śāntā vimalaṃ rukmavarṇam /
dhyātvātmasthamacalaṃ sve śarīre
kavi parebhyaḥ paramaṃ parañca //

Sages, seers and hermits perceive you as a manifestation of Brahmā. You are a magnanimous and a benevolent benefactor of all. You are peaceful, serene and tranquil; are pristine pure, uncorrupt, without any blemishes or taints whatsoever, and most holy; and you are radiant, splendorous and glorious (Rukma). You are established in the eternal Ātmā (soul or spirit) residing inside the body of a creature, and you are supreme and transcendental, most sublime and subtle. Learned 'Kavis' (literally poets, but here meaning those bards who are skilled, learned, adroit and wise in the scriptures and the essentials of Vedānta while they pray to you) concentrate, meditate and contemplate upon you (i.e. they sing your glories through their compositions which are not only poetically beautiful but also highly intellectually evolved and devotionally vibrant and succulent) (4).

[Note :—The word 'Rukma' literally means golden coloured. Here it means that Śrī Rāma's glories and virtues are glowing and radiant like the glow of pure gold. The virtues and attributes of the Lord are as pure as the purest form of gold.]

त्वत:प्रसूता जगत:प्रसूति सर्वातमसृष्टेः परमाणुभूतः।
अणोरणीयात्महतोमहीयांस्त्वामेव सर्वे प्रवदन्ति सन्तः।।5।।

tvataḥprasūtā jagataḥprasūti sarvātamasṛṣṭeḥ paramāṇubhūtaḥ /
aṇoraṇīyātmahatomahīyāṃstvāmeva sarve pravadanti santaḥ //

It is from you that the whole cosmos is created. You are the Ātmā (soul/spirit) of all that exists. You are the basic, elementary and primary ingredient upon which this whole structure of this creation is founded, i.e. you are the minute and subtle atom which is innately present in the entire structure of the cosmos as its integral part, and without which there would be no structure at all which could be called a 'cosmos'. Those who are saintly, pious, holy, wise, erudite, sagacious and adroit regard you as being the most subtle and microscopic entity as well the one who is most huge, colossus, infinite and having a macrocosmic form (5).

हिरण्यगर्भो जगदन्तरात्मा त्वत्तोऽधिजातः पुरुषः पुराणः।
स जायमानो भवता विसृष्टो यथाविधानं सकलं ससर्ज।।6।।

hiraṇyagarbho jagadantarātmā tvatto'dhijātaḥ puruṣaḥ purāṇaḥ /
sa jāyamāno bhavatā visṛṣṭo yathāvidhānaṃ sakalaṃ sasarja //

You are 'Hiraṇyagarbha', the 'Ātmā' (cosmic soul) of the entire cosmos and the great 'Puruṣa' (the Virāṭ; the primal male aspect of nature) lauded, glorified and honoured by the Purāṇas (the mythological ancient history of the Hindus). It is from you that the whole world has been born. It is from you that 'he' (Puruṣa; the Virāṭ or the primal Male) has been born who then produced the rest of the world and laid down the basic laws and regulations to govern its proper functioning (6).

[Note :—'Hiraṇyagarbha' was the primordial cosmic egg or embryo from which Virāṭ Puruṣa, the first macrocosmic male aspect of creation was born. Please see Canto 14, note to verse no. 9 for elaboration. In terms of Vedānta, Hiraṇyagarbha represented the sum total of all the 'subtle bodies' present in the cosmos.

(ii) The 'spark of life' present in this cosmic egg at the macro level was called Parmātmā, which is also the same as the Ātmā present at the micro level in the individual creature.

(iii) The 'Puruṣa' or Lord Viṣṇu mentioned by the Purāṇas refers to the Virāṭ Puruṣa of Vedānta who was born from Hiraṇyagarbha, and he was the sum total of all the cosmic 'gross bodies' present in it. His counterpart was the individual 'male' creature on the earth. The word 'Virāṭ' means vast, infinite, measureless, huge, colossus and all inclusive. The entire creation was incorporated in the form of this Puruṣa. As to how colossus and all encompassing he was, Śrī Rāma has himself given its glimpse to Hanumāna in Canto 10, verse no. 12-18.

(iv) At the micro level of creation, the 'Puruṣa', who was the first primal male from whom the human beings were born, was called 'Manu' (see also verse no. 18 of this Canto and note to verse no. 19-19½ of Canto 14). He laid down the principles that would act like a constitution for the entire living beings in a treatise called 'Manu Smṛti' which outlines the general codes of moral and ethical behaviour and to serve as a guideline for Manu's offspring, the human race, to live a civilised and a regulated life as opposed to the life of a savage.

(v) A separate appendix no. 3 to this book outlines the entire Vedāntic concept of such principles as the different bodies of a creature, the concept of Ātmā, Brahma etc. as well as the micro and macrocosms in lucid and simple language with the help of sketches.]

त्वत्तो वेदाः सकलाः सम्प्रतेवृत्तास्त्वय्येवान्ते संस्थिति लभन्ते।
पश्यामि त्वां जगतो हेतुभूतं नृत्यं तं स्वे ह्रदये सन्निविष्टम्।। 7।।

tvatto vedāḥ sakalāḥ sampratevṛttāstvayyevānte saṃsthiti labhante/
paśyāmi tvāṃ jagato hetubhūtaṃ nṛtyaṃ taṃ sve hṛdaye sanniviṣṭam//

The Vedas have been created by you (see this Canto, verse no. 15 also); it is in you that everything that exists find its ultimate rest (see Canto 14, verse no. 2). I find or see that you are the basic cause or the primary source of the entire creation. You are always present (i.e. enshrined and honourably established) in my heart (7).

त्वयैवेदं भ्राम्यते ब्रह्मचक्रं मायावी त्वं जगतामेकनाथः।
नमामि त्वां शरणं सम्पद्ये योगात्मानं चित्पति दिव्यनृत्यम्।। 8।।

tvayaivedaṃ bhrāmyate brahmacakraṃ māyāvī tvaṃ jagatāmekanāthaḥ/
namāmi tvāṃ śaraṇaṃ sampadye yogātmānaṃ citpati divyanṛtyam//

You are the one who revolves the universal wheel of creation. You are the mystical maverick Lord who is the only Master of the world. I most reverentially bow to you and take your refuge and seek shelter at your august feet. You are an embodiment and the soul or spirit of Yoga. You are the Lord of pure consciousness and awareness. You are a divine manifestation who plays or stages the cosmic dance (of creation and destruction) (8).

पश्यामि त्वां परमाकाशमध्ये नृत्यन्तं ते महिमानं स्मरामि।
सर्वात्मानं बहुधा सन्निविष्टं ब्रह्मानन्दमनुभूयानुभूय।।9।।

paśyāmi tvāṃ paramākāśamadhye nṛtyantaṃ te mahimānaṃ smarāmi /
sarvātmānaṃ bahudhā sanniviṣṭaṃ brahmānandamanubhūyānubhūya //

I perceive you as being constantly present in the center of the great sky. [That is, you are established as the dazzling and splendorous Sun in the sky of the universe, illuminating the realm and dispelling darkness of ignorance; symbolically you are present in the sky of the heart of a creature, removing the darkness of ignorance present in his heart.] By remembering your majestic glories and great virtues as the one who is the Soul or Ātmā of all that exists, and who is supreme and exalted in all respects, I feel a surge of supreme bliss and beatitude, of joy and felicity of having witnessed or experienced Brahma, in my heart (9).

ओंकारस्ते वाचको मुक्तिवीजं त्वमाक्षरं प्रकृतौ गूढरूपम्।
त्वं त्वां सत्यं प्रवदन्तीह सन्तः स्वयंप्रभं भवतो यत्प्रकाशम्।।10।।

oṃkāraste vācako muktibījaṃ
tvamākṣaraṃ prakṛtau gūḍharūpam /
tvaṃ tvāṃ satyaṃ pravadantīha santaḥ
svayaṃprabhaṃ bhavato yatprakāśam //

The cosmic word OM is the divine incantation which is an acronym for you as well as is the seed which can give the fruit of emancipation and salvation. You have a sublime and subtle presence in a secret mode in every alphabet of the language or in each of the alphabets that make up this word OM. You are by nature imperishable; it is your inherent and innate secret quality. Sages, saints, seers and hermits describe this as your truthful form. You are self-illuminated and radiant with the incandescent splendour of your glory and majesty (10).

[Note :—OM is an acronym as well as a synonym for Brahma. It consist of three letters—A, U, M, which encompass in their ambit the entire creation, from its very beginning to its conclusion. OM is also called 'Nāda', the cosmic vibration that generates energy that produces 'fire', and to counter this fire, the 'water' was produced. The letter 'A' represent the waking state of consciousness, the letter 'U' the dreaming state, and the letter 'M' the deep sleep state of consciousness respectively. The silence that follows after the pronunciation of the divine word OM, when the mouth closes, is the 4 state of consciousness called 'Turīya'. This is the state of utter and complete bliss.]

स्तुवन्ति त्वां सततं सर्वदेवा नमन्ति त्वामृषयाः क्षीणदोषाः।
शान्तात्मानः सत्यसन्धं वरिष्ठ विशन्ति त्वां यतयो ब्रह्मनिष्ठाः।। 11।।

stuvanti tvāṃ satataṃ sarvadevā
namanti tvāmṛṣayāḥ kṣīṇadoṣāḥ /
śāntātmānaḥ satyasandhaṃ variṣṭha
viśanti tvāṃ yatayo brahmaniṣṭhāḥ //

All the Gods constantly, consistently and persistently pray and pay their obeisance to you, sing your glories and laud your virtues. Those sages who have no faults and blemishes in them, who are pure, uncorrupt and clean, bow reverentially before you. Great and senior ascetics and hermits who are steadfast in their thoughts of Brahma (i.e. who are always engrossed in, or firmly rooted in the thoughts of Brahma, are persistent and resolute in it, who contemplate, meditate upon and pursue the supreme and absolute Truth) find their last and final rest in you (i.e. they merge their Ātmā with you as the culmination of their spiritual pursuits in order to obtain emancipation and salvation). You are the calm, peaceful and blissful Ātmā. You are the focal point of all that is truthful and real (11).

एको वेदो बहुशाखो ह्यनन्तस्त्वामेवैकं बोधयत्येकरूपम्।
संवेद्यं त्वां शरणं ये प्रसन्नास्तेषां शान्तिः शाश्वती नेतरेषाम्।। 12।।

eko vedo bahuśākho hyanantastvāmevaikaṃ bodhayatyekarūpam/
saṃvedyaṃ tvāṃ śaraṇaṃ ye prasannāsteṣāṃ śāntiḥ śāśvatī netareṣām //

The Vedas are essentially one, but they have many branches, classifications, names and usage. The Veda essentially enlightens the creature about your form (Śrī Rāma's divine form as Brahma) that is eternally, immutably and indivisibly one and unique (although the different versions of the Vedas describe different aspects of your single form in various and different ways as perceived and understood from different perspectives or angles by different sages and seers. That is, though there are four Vedas, many sub-Vedas etc. but when one delves deep into them and seeks their ultimate preaching in its purest crystalline form, all the scriptures describe only one immutable and indivisible ultimate Truth and Reality, and that is Brahma, the Lord God, the Supreme Being. The imagery, the circumstance, the time and era may be very different from one version to another, but all of them point to a single central point that resembles the hub or axle of the wheel where the spokes are the numerous scriptures and the circumference is the all encompassing and all enveloping knowledge about the Truth—see also canto 13, verse no. 15). Only those who take shelter and refuse in your august and holy feet which are worthy of being sought, get eternal and stable peace, tranquility and happiness as well as beatitude and felicity. No one else gets this privilege. [That is, only those who have sincere and steady devotion for you can really hope to get peace; there is no other alternative to it.] (12)

भवानीशोऽणिमादिमांस्तेजोराशिर्ब्रह्मविश्वं परमेष्ठी वरिष्ठः।
आत्मानन्दं चानुसूयानुशेते स्वयंज्योतिर्वचनो नित्यमुक्तः।। 13।।

bhavānīśo'ṇimādimāṃstejorāśirbrahmaviśvaṃ parameṣṭhī variṣṭhaḥ/
ātmānandaṃ cānusūyānuśete svayaṃjyotirvacano nityamuktaḥ//

You are the Lord of Bhavānī (i.e. you are also Lord Śiva, because Bhavānī is another name for Pārvatī, the divine consort of Śiva). You possess the mystical powers such as 'Aṇimā' etc. You are a fount of radiant and splendorous energy. You are the supreme Brahma who pervades the entire universe. You are 'Parameṣṭhi' (i.e. Lords Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva or the Trinity Gods, as well as are the Fire-God who represent the vital spark of life and the energy that drives the cosmos). You are most exalted and Supreme Being who is superior to all of them at once (because each one of them is only one fraction of your complete self). You are the Ātmā which is in a perpetually eternal blissful state. You are self-illuminated and radiant with an incandescent energy and splendour effusing from you. You have revealed your glories by your own words (as in Canto nos. 11-14). You are eternally liberated and free from being shackled to any of the delusions present in this creation (13).

[Note :— There are 8 mystical powers or accomplishment called 'Siddhis' mentioned in this verse. They are the following—(i) 'Aṇimā' means the power to become microscopic so that one becomes invisible to the naked eye; (ii) 'Mahimā' is to have majesty, glory and fame; (iii) 'Garimā is to have weight, stature, dignity, gravity and significance, (iv) 'Laghimā' is to have simplicity and humility; (v) 'Prāpti' is to be able to attain or obtain anything wished or desired; (vi) 'Prakramya' is to have valour, strength, powers, prowess, potential and punch; (vii) Īśvata is to be able to have lordship or sway over others, and (viii) 'Vaśitva' is to be able to control and subdue others.]

एको देवस्त्वं करोषीह विश्वं त्वं पालयस्यखिलं विश्वरूपः।
त्वय्येवास्ते विलयं विन्दतोदं नमामि त्वां शरणं त्वां प्रपन्नः।।14।।
eko devastvaṃ karoṣīha viśvaṃ tvaṃ pālayasyakhilaṃ viśvarūpaḥ/
tvayyevāste vilayaṃ vindatodaṃ namāmi tvāṃ śaraṇaṃ tvāṃ prapanraḥ//

You are the only Lord who pervades uniformally in this whole universe (see also Canto 14). You are the Lord who takes care, protects, sustains and nourishes it. At the end, the universe merges and dissolves in you (see also Canto 13, verse no. 18 and canto 14, verse nos. 6 and 47). I (Hanumāna) have taken shelter in you holy, divine and august feet and I most reverentially bow before you to pay my obeisance (14).

त्वामेकमाहुः परमं च रामं प्राणं बहन्तं हरिमित्रमीशम्।
इन्दुं मृत्युमनलं चेकितानं धातारमादित्यमनेकरूपम्।।15।।
tvāmekamāhuḥ paramaṃ ca rāmaṃ prāṇaṃ bahantaṃ harimitramīśam/
induṃ mṛtyumanalaṃ cekitānaṃ dhātāramādityamanekarūpam//

Oh Śrī Rāma! You are the one who bestows life or blesses one with the boon of life. You are the one who is called the supreme, sublime, subtle and transcendental entity (Brahma). You are Hari (Viṣṇu), Mitra (a friend) and Īśa (Lord). [That is, you are the supreme life giving Lord who sustains, nourishes, protects and helps the world like a friend, and you are at the same time the Lord of it.] You are the one who has assumed many different forms such as the Moon, Death, Anila (fire), Cekitāna (a wise and intelligence person; Lord Mahādeva or Śiva), Dhātā (Brahmā, the creator; one of the principal Wind-Gods called 'Prāṇa') and Āditya (sun) (15).

त्वमक्षरं परमं वेदितव्यं त्वमस्य विश्वसय परं निधानम्।
त्वमव्ययः शाश्वतो धर्मगोप्ता सनातनस्त्वं पुरुषोत्तमोऽसि।।16।।
tvamakṣaraṃ paramaṃ veditavyaṃ tvamasya viśvasaya paraṃ nidhānam/
tvamavyayaḥ śāśvato dharmagoptā sanātanastvaṃ puruṣottamo'si//

You are the supreme imperishable One who is worth knowing about. You are the ultimate resting place for the entire creation. It is you who never decays or perishes, are stable, eternal, unchanging, and universal, are a protector of 'Dharma' (righteousness, probity, propriety, nobility of thought and conduct and virtuousness), are ancient, eternal and infinitely truthful, and are the most exalted person in existence (16).

त्वमेव विष्णुश्चतुराननस्त्वं त्वमेव रुद्रो भगवानपीशः।
त्वं विश्वनाभिः प्रकृतिः प्रतिष्ठा सर्वेश्वरस्त्वं परमेश्वरोऽसि।। 17।।

tvameva viṣṇuścaturānanastvaṃ tvameva rudro bhagavānapīśaḥ /
tvaṃ viśvanābhiḥ prakṛtiḥ pratiṣṭhā sarveśvarastvaṃ parameśvaro'si //

You are the one who is also known as Viṣṇu and Caturānana, the 4-headed Brahmā (i.e. these two Gods are none other than your manifestations in their respective forms). You are Rudra and Lord Īśa (i.e. Śiva, the Lord God all of the Gods). You are the central focal point or hub or literally the 'navel' of the universe. You are Mother Nature called 'Prakṛti' personified. You are majestic, famed, dignified and firmly established Lord of all that exists. You are the supreme, transcendental Īśvara or Lord God (17).

त्वामेकमाहुः पुरुषं पुराणमादित्यवर्णं तमसः परस्तात्।
चिन्मात्रमव्यक्तमचिन्त्यरूपं खं ब्रह्मशून्यं प्रकृति निर्गुणं च।। 18।।

tvāmekamāhuḥ puruṣaṃ purāṇamādityavarṇaṃ tamasaḥ parastāt /
cinmātramavyaktamacintyarūpaṃ khaṃ brahmaśūnyaṃ prakṛti nirguṇaṃ ca //

You are the ancient primal 'Puruṣa' mentioned by the Purāṇas (see also verse no. 6). You are one and the only one. You are glorious like the sun. You are beyond the darkness called 'Tama' (representing ignorance, delusions, evils, misdeeds and perversions of all kinds). You are enlightened and wise. You are without any attributes and descriptions and you cannot be either seen or explained because you are beyond the reach of perception, comprehension and understanding. You are 'Kha' (representing the fathomless void of space or sky; the tube in the throat through which a man breathes—the trachea; a spot; the mouth of the cosmos or the hole; the world; Brahmā the creator who pronounced the primary words at the beginning of creation). You are Brahma (the sublime, supreme transcendental Being who is pure consciousness, pure Truth and absolute Reality). You are the void of space or sky (i.e. you are vast, measureless, infinite and fathomless like the sky; you are pure, spotless and clean like the sky). You are 'Prakṛti' personified (i.e. you are Mother Nature as well as the inherent habits, temperaments and tendencies of a creature that are his innate nature). You are 'Nirguṇa' (i.e. you have no

Guṇas or attributes and qualities that can be comprehended or measured) (18).

यदन्तरा सर्वमिदं विभाति यदव्ययं निर्मलमेकरूपम्।
किमप्यचिन्त्यं तव रूपमेकं यदन्तरा यत्प्रतिभाति तत्त्वम्।। 19।।
yadantarā sarvamidaṃ vibhāti yadavyayaṃ nirmalamekarūpam/
kimapyacintyaṃ tava rūpamekaṃ yadantarā yatpratibhāti tattvam//

Your divine, subtle, eclectic and sublime form, in whose bosom this whole world glows with incandescence, a form which is imperishable and non-decayable, is crystal and pristine pure. It is one, without a second, immutable, indivisible and uniform. It is a subject that is beyond comprehension and purview of the mind and intellect. It is illuminated, radiant, splendorous, efflorescent and incandescent with glory and majesty (19).

योगेश्वरं रूपमनन्तशक्तिं परायण ब्रह्मतनुं पवित्रम्।
नमाम सर्वे शरणार्थिनस्त्वां प्रसीद भूताधिपते प्रसीद।। 20।।
yogeśvaraṃ rūpamanantaśaktiṃ parāyaṇa brahmatanuṃ pavitram/
namāma sarve śaraṇārthinastvāṃ prasīda bhūtādhipate prasīda//

He who is the Lord of Yogīs (ascetics and hermits), has a fame that is without any beginning or end (i.e. Śrī Rāma's fame is eternal), is endowed with immeasurable and indefinable 'Śakti' (energy majesty, powers, strength, potentials, abilities, stamina, prowess, agility and valour), is a manifestation of the supreme Brahmā, is most holy, crystal clean, pristine pure, untainted and unadulterated—all of us (your devotees) bow before and pay our deepest obeisance and reverence to the Lord of all the creatures (i.e. Śrī Rāma); we most humble seek refuge in his holy, divine and august feet. Be gracious and benevolent upon us; be pleased with us, oh Lord (20).

त्वत्पादपद्मस्मरणादशेषं संसारबीजं विलयं प्रयाति।
मनो नियम्य प्रणिधाय कायं प्रसादयाम्येकरसं भवन्तम्।। 21।।
tvatpādapadmasmaraṇādaśeṣaṃ saṃsārabījaṃ vilayaṃ prayāti/
mano niyamya praṇidhāya kāyaṃ prasādayāmyekarasaṃ bhavantam//

By remembering your lotus-feet, all the seeds (root causes) that give rise to this mundane, artificial and entrapping world, such as the cycle of transmigration, are destroyed or eliminated. [That is, by having devotion in Śrī Rāma's holy feet, one gets liberation from the continuous cycle of births and deaths, thereby finding deliverance from this bondage represented by the world of birth and death together with its accompanying sorrows, pains and torments.] By restraining the 'Mana' (mind, intellect and heart) and exercising control over the body, I concentrate myself, mentally and bodily, to focus my attention on worshipping and praying to you, in having undiluted and sincere devotion for you, and to honour you with my whole being as one single unit, with both my mind and body involved in your worship (21).

नमोऽस्तु रामाय भवोद्भवाय कालाय सर्वकहराय तुभ्यम्।
नमोऽस्तु रामाय कपर्दिने ते नमोऽग्नये दर्शय रूपमग्यम्।।22।।
namo'stu rāmāya bhavodbhavāya kālāya sarvakaharāya tubhyam/
namo'stu rāmāya kapardine te namo'gnaye darśaya rūpamagyam//

I reverentially bow to you, Śrī Rāma, who is the primary cause of creation of the entire world. You are the one who has himself created it. You are like the death God personified for the ultimate annihilation or conclusion of the creation originally created by you. You are the one who can vanquish all and everything. I bow reverentially before you, Śrī Rāma, who are a personification of both the 'fire element', or you are Fire-God personified, and Lord Śiva or Rudra, called Kapardina. You have countless forms ' (22).

ततः स भगवान् रामो लक्ष्मणेन सह प्रभुः। संहृत्य परमं रूपं प्रकृतिस्थोऽभवत्स्वयम्।।23।।
tataḥ sa bhagavān rāmo lakṣmaṇena saha prabhuḥ/
saṃhṛtya paramaṃ rūpaṃ prakṛtistho'bhavatsvayam//

When Hanumāna prayed to Śrī Rāma as above, the Lord concealed his divine, supreme and transcendental macrocosmic sublime, holy and divine form along with that of Lakṣmaṇa, and reverted back to his earlier form as a normal human being (23).

स तस्य स्तवमाकर्ण्य वायुपुत्रश्च धीमतः। प्राह गम्भीरया वाचा हनूमन्तं रघूत्तमः।।24।।
sa tasya stavamākarṇya vāyuputraśca dhīmataḥ/
prāha gambhīrayā vācā hanūmantaṃ raghūttamaḥ//

When Śrī Rāma heard what the son of the Wind-God (Hanumāna) had to say, he emphatically said to him in a serious voice—(24).

स्तोष्यन्ति येऽनया स्तुत्या ते यास्यन्ति परां गतिम्। स्थिरो भव हनूमंस्त्वं कार्यमोपायिकं कुरु।।25।।

stoṣyanti ye'nayā stutyā te yāsyanti parāṃ gatim /
sthiro bhava hanūmaṃstvaṃ kāryamopāyikaṃ kuru //

'Those who pray to me and honour me by using these Stotras (devotional hymns that Hanumāna had used to honour the Lord) will be able to attain the ultimate end which is called 'Paramagati' or the supreme stature where the soul of the individual merges with the supreme Soul of the Lord. [This state is called the final and ultimate Mukti or emancipation and salvation.] Oh Hanumāna! Be steady and unwavering in your path and be committed in your devotion; don't be callous and nonchalant towards it; don't falter or waver from it. Be resolute and firm in your conviction. Work cleverly, skillfully and adroitly ' (25).

Thus ends Canto 15 of the ancient epic called Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa written by sage Vālmīki describing the prayers of Hanumāna in honour of Śrī Rāma.

* * *

Canto 16

Slaying of the 10-headed Rāvaṇa of Laṅkā and Śrī Rāma's coronation at Ayodhyā

This single Canto covers the conventional story of the latter half of Rāmāyaṇa in one single swipe. It outlines the important events in a staccato, rapid-fire style without going into the details. It covers Śrī Rāma's friendship with the monkey king Sugrīva, the slaying of his elder brother Vālī who was an arch rival of Sugrīva, the collection of the monkey army and Śrī Rāma's departure for Laṅkā, the construction of the bridge over the ocean and landing of Śrī Rāma's army on the shores of Laṅkā, the killing of the 10-headed Rāvaṇa along with his demon army, and the enthroning of Vibhīṣaṇa as the king of Laṅkā, and finally the return of Śrī Rāma to Ayodhyā, along with Sītā who had been earlier abducted by this Rāvaṇa, and his happy coronation as its king.

This very brief outline diverges from other versions of Rāmāyaṇa in the following important points besides brevity—(a) Śrī Rāma requests Hanumāna to befriend him to Sugrīva instead of Hanumāna suggesting this friendship, and (b) Lakṣmaṇa jumped angrily into the ocean when the latter did not pay heed to Śrī Rāma's pleadings to let his army cross it. Lakṣmaṇa's vehement wrath made the ocean boil, causing turmoil for the marine creatures. Śrī Rāma, ever the merciful Lord, reproached Lakṣmaṇa and refilled the ocean with the tears which Sītā had shed during her tormenting days in captivity at Laṅkā. Another fascinating aspect is that the two brothers, Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa had mounted on the backs of Hanumāna and Aṅgada respectively during the course of the entire journey from Kiṣkindhā right up to the shores of the ocean. This mode of transport has also been described by sage Veda Vyāsa in his own epic 'Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa', an English version of which has been published separately by this author, but this transport has not been mentioned by saint poet Tulasīdāsa in his much popular rendering of the epic as 'Rāma Carita Mānasa'. Besides this, no details have been mentioned here as to how Rāvaṇa's other brother, Kumbhakaraṇa, and his son Meghanāda were killed by Śrī Rāma. The war at Laṅkā has been completely skipped. Perhaps, the aim of the author of this book, sage Vālmīki, was to skip those events which he had already described in great detail in his renowned epic, 'the Rāmāyaṇa', and narrate only those events which had not found any mention in it, such as the remaining half of the story from canto 17 to 27 that follow.

रामः प्रत्याह च पुनर्हनूमन्तं महाद्युतिः। रक्षसा मे हृता भार्या रावणेन दुरात्मना।।1।।

rāmaḥ pratyāha ca punarhanūmantaṃ mahādyutiḥ/
rakṣasā me hṛtā bhāryā rāvaṇena durātmanā//

Then Śrī Rāma said to Hanumāna once again, 'Oh Mahāvīra (literally, the most brave, strong, valiant, powerful and courageous one)! The wicked hearted, evil and pervert Rāvaṇa has abducted my wife slyly (1).

सुग्रीवेण रामं सख्यं कारयाद्य प्लवङ्गम्। हसित्वा मधुरं वीरो हनूमानब्रवीद्वचः।।2।।
तव भार्या महाभाग रावणेन हृतेति यत्। विश्वं यथेदमाभाति तथेदं प्रतिभाति मे।।3।।

sugrīveṇa rāmaṃ sakhyaṃ kārayādya plavaṅgam/
hasitvā madhuraṃ vīro hanūmānabravīdvacaḥ//
tava bhāryā mahābhāga rāvaṇena hṛteti yat/
viśvaṃ yathedamābhāti tathedaṃ pratibhāti me//

Oh exalted monkey! Befriend me with Sugrīva'. Then the brave

Hanumāna smiled sweetly and said (2), 'Oh great Lord! Your wife has been apparently abducted by Rāvaṇa (the 10-headed king of Laṅkā)—this is what the world thinks and this is what I am also aware of (as far as my information is concerned) (3). [2-3]

[Note :—Hanumāna uses the word 'Abhāsa' which literally means something which appears to be true, something of which one is aware of but does not know for certain whether it is a fact or the truth. The implied meaning of what Hanumāna says is 'I know your true, supreme, all-pervading, omnipotent transcendental form; I know that Sītā is your divine consort, the supreme Goddess Lakṣmī; I know that no power on this earth can ever dare to abduct that divine Goddess who has manifested herself as Sītā. So this abduction is a trick played by you yourself because of your powers to create delusions called Māyā. Actually, she hasn't been stolen at all, and you don't need anyone's help to retrieve her. You can do it yourself'.]

तथापि प्रभुणादिष्टं कार्यमेव हि किंकरैः। इत्युक्त्वा हनूमांस्तूर्ण प्रसन्नेनान्तरात्मना।।4।।
आरोप्य स्कन्धयोर्वीरौ सुग्रीवान्तिकमानयत्। तौ दृष्ट्वा पुरुषव्याघ्रो सुग्रीवो वानरोत्तमः।।5।।

tathāpi prabhuṇādiṣṭaṃ kāryameva hi kiṃkaraiḥ /
ityuktvā hanūmāṃstūrṇa prasannenāntarātmanā //
āropya skandhayorvīrau sugrīvāntikamānayat /
tau dṛṣṭvā puruṣavyāghro sugrīvo vānarottamaḥ //

However, whatever you have ordered, it is the duty of your servants or subordinates to carry them out without asking questions'. Saying this, Hanumāna felt highly privileged, honoured and exhilarated in his heart (4). He made the two brave brothers sit on his shoulders and brought them swiftly to where Sugrīva was. The most exalted amongst the monkeys, or the excellent monkey named Sugrīva saw them (the two brothers) who were like lions amongst mankind (i.e. Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa were like emperors amongst men; they were brave, courageous, strong, bold, robust and possessed all qualities like that of the king of the jungle, the lion) (5). [4-5]

वालिनं तं जितं मेने प्राप्तां मेने रुमां स्त्रियम्। सख्यं चकार रामेण दिष्ट्यादिष्ट्येति चाब्रवीत्।।6।।

vālinaṃ taṃ jitaṃ mene prāptāṃ menerumāṃ striyam /
sakhyaṃ cakāra rāmeṇa diṣṭyādiṣṭyeti cābravīt //

Seeing them, Sugrīva felt reassured and convinced mentally that he is sure to get back his lost wife Ruma and obtain victory over (his arch arrival and elder brother) Vālī. He praised his good fortune and cheerfully and gladly made friends with Śrī Rāma (6).

[Note :—The selfish character of Sugrīva has come to the fore here. He did not make friends with Śrī Rāma out of any empathy or sympathy for him, and neither because he realised that Śrī Rāma was the divine Lord and it was his profound luck that Śrī Rāma had selected him to be the chosen one to help him fight the war on his behalf. He had befriended Śrī Rāma exclusively because he had a strong desire to settle scores with his brother Vālī, and he thought that Śrī Rāma was the most appropriate backing that he had needed so much.]

वालिनो विलयं कृत्वाराज्यं चास्मै निवेद्य च। नानादेश्यान्वा नरांश्च आनाय्य रघुनन्दनौ।।7।।
vālino vilayaṃ kṛtvārājyaṃ cāsmai nivedya ca/
nānādeśyānvā narāṃśca ānāyya raghunandanau//

After Vālī was killed and Sugrīva crowned (on the throne of Kiṣkindhā), Raghunandana (Śrī Rāma; literally, the son of king Raghu's clan) summoned all the monkeys from all the countries in all the corners/directions of the world (7).

हनूमदङ्गदारूढौ भ्रातरौ रामलक्ष्मणौ। सिन्धौस्तटं तौ ययतुः सग्रीवेण स प्रभुः।।8।।
hanūmadaṅgadārūḍhau bhrātarau rāmalakṣmaṇau/
sindhaustaṭaṃ tau yayatuḥ sagrīveṇa sa prabhuḥ//

Riding on the backs (or shoulders) of Hanumāna and Aṅgada respectively, the two brothers Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, accompanied by Sugrīva (and his army), came to the shore of the ocean (8).

पारेसमुद्रं लङ्कां च निरूप्याह रघूत्तमः। वानरा हि यथा यान्ति लङ्कालक्ष्मण तत्कुरु।।9।।
pāresamudraṃ laṅkāṃ ca nirūpyāha raghūttamaḥ/
vānarā hi yathā yānti laṅkālakṣmaṇa tatkuru//

Finding out that Laṅkā was across the ocean on its other side, the most exalted Raghu (Śrī Rāma) instructed, 'Oh Lakṣmaṇa! Find out a way by which all of us, along with the army of monkeys, can reach Laṅkā' (9).

रामस्य वचनं श्रुत्वा समुद्रं प्राह लक्ष्मणः। सिन्धोस्त्वं स्तम्भयात्मानं यथा यास्यन्ति वानराः।।10।।
rāmasya vacanaṃ śrutvā samudraṃ prāha lakṣmaṇaḥ/
sindhostvaṃ stambhayātmānaṃ yathā yāsyanti vānarāḥ//

Hearing the words of Śrī Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa requested the ocean, 'Oh Ocean! Hold yourself, literally, control yourself and make yourself steady, or make yourself rigid and stiff so that the monkeys can get across your surface (by walking over it)' (10).

सिन्धुस्तु प्रभुणादिष्टं न सुश्राव यदा। तदा लक्ष्मणः क्रोधसदीप्तः पपाताब्धेर्जलान्तरे ।।11।।
तद्देहवह्निशिखाया शुशोष जलधेर्जलम्। यादांसि स्थलभाजीनि देवा भीता दिशोऽद्रवन् ।।12।।

sindhustu prabhuṇādiṣṭaṃ na suśrāva yadā /
tadā lakṣmaṇaḥ krodhasadīptaḥ papātābdherjalāntare //
taddehavahniśikhāyā śuśoṣa jaladherjalam /
yādāṃsi sthalabhājīni devā bhītā diśo'dravan //

When the ocean paid no attention to what the Lord said, Lakṣmaṇa glowed with anger and lit up furiously. He jumped into the water of the ocean (11) and began to dry it up (literally, 'soak' the water or 'evaporate' it with the tremendous heat generated from his body like an immersion heater on being immersed in a bucket of water not only heats the water but makes it boil and eventually evaporate). With the fierce fire of his burning anger which made his body red hot like charcoal (or like an immersion heater used to warm water in the household), all the marine creatures became extremely agitated and perturbed. Even the Gods became terrified at the prospects of the ocean drying up, and they panicked and ran away helter-skelter in every direction in total disarray (12). [11-12]

तद्दृष्ट्वा महदाश्चर्यं वानरा विस्मयं गताः। हाहाकारं प्रचक्रुस्ते सर्वे लोकांश्चराचराः ।।13।।

taddṛṣṭvā mahadāścaryaṃ vānarā vismayaṃ gatāḥ /
hāhākāraṃ pracakruste sarve lokāṃścarācarāḥ //

Seeing the fantastic, wonderful and unprecedented spectacle, the monkeys were extremely astonished, mystified and spell bound. There was a panicked and terrifying tumult all around in both the animate as well as the inanimate worlds (i.e. both the living creatures as well as the non living ones, or both the moveable and immovable creature of the creation, such as humans, animals etc. as well as plants and mountains felt threatened as if the dooms day had finally arrived) (13).

ऋषयो भूतसङ्घाश्च स्वस्तिस्वस्तीति चाब्रुवन्। राघवो लक्ष्मणं प्राह नैतद्युक्तं त्वया कृतम् ।।14।।
पुनरेनं पूरयामि सीताविरहयेन वै। अश्रुणेति प्रतिज्ञाय तं तथापूरयत्प्रभुः ।।15।।

ṛṣayo bhūtasaṅghāśca svastisvastīti cābruvan /
rāghavo lakṣmaṇaṃ prāha naitadyuktaṃ tvayā kṛtam //
punarenaṃ pūrayāmi sītāvirahayena vai /
aśruṇeti pratijñāya taṃ tathāpūrayatprabhuḥ //

All the sages and seers accompanied by all the creatures of the world pleaded for mercy and kindness, begging for their welfare and wellbeing. Anguished and sorry for the upheaval and unwarranted torments created for the world, Śrī Rāma politely admonished Lakṣmaṇa, saying 'you have not done the right thing. Now I shall refill the ocean by the tears shed by Sītā (during her tormenting days of separation from me)'. With these words, the Lord refilled the ocean with the tears (of Sītā) as promised (14-15).

[Note :—This is the reason why the ocean has become sour and salty. Earlier, it was not so, but the tears shed by Sītā mingled with the sweet waters of the ocean, converting the entire body of water into its present salty form.]

रामोपरि तदाकाशात्पुष्पवृष्टिः पपात ह। लोकाश्च सुस्थिता आसंश्चिन्तयित्वा पुनः पुनः ।।16।।

rāmopari tadākāśātpuṣpavṛṣṭiḥ papāta ha /
lokāśca susthitā āsaṃścintayitvā punaḥ punaḥ //

Flowers rained down upon Śrī Rāma from the heavens (as a mark of thanksgiving by the Gods and to express their gratitude as well as to show honour to Śrī Rāma for his kindness, magnanimity and mercy as well as for his compassionate and gracious nature of not allowing Lakṣmaṇa to dry up the ocean, and instead refilling it with the tears of Sītā even at the cost of his losing his chance of crossing the waters with his army, thereby putting the safely of Sītā at peril). The entire world felt reassured and it recovered its earlier composure. It repeatedly pondered over the whole episode (and marveled at the laudable and honourable and gracious nature of the Lord in being so merciful and compassionate towards the creation so as to ensure that no one suffers because of him) (16).

[Note :—The world repeatedly wondered at the merciful nature of Śrī Rāma. It was awed and deadpanned by the fact that Śrī Rāma refilled the ocean when he saw that the creatures were horrified and suffered by the fierce boiling of the waters of the ocean by the wrath of Lakṣmaṇa. He even snubbed his own brother who was trying to help him. He put the welfare of the world first and his own interest of retrieving Sītā by crossing the ocean as well as the temerity of the ocean to remain stubborn and defy the Lord's request as secondary. Under ordinary circumstances, Śrī Rāma should have been pleased with Lakṣmaṇa to have given the ocean his due; but no, the merciful Lord is so tender hearted that he could not allow the marine creatures to suffer, suffocate and die just in order to serve his own purpose of crossing the water of the ocean at any cost. Any other army commander would have been glad if the ocean had actually dried up; but it is not so with Śrī Rāma.]

सिन्धुना संस्तुतो रामः सेतुं सिन्धौ वबन्ध ह। लङ्कायां रावणं हत्वा सगणं मधुसूदनः।।17।।

sindhunā saṃstuto rāmaḥ setuṃ sindhau vabandha ha /
laṅkāyāṃ rāvaṇaṃ hatvā sagaṇaṃ madhusūdanaḥ //

Then the ocean prayed to Śrī Rāma in humility. Thereafter, Madhusūdana (Śrī Rāma) constructed a bridge over it (ocean), went to Laṅkā and killed (the 10-headed demon) Rāvaṇa along with his companions (17).

आरोप्य पुष्पके सीतां विभीषणसहायवान्। अयोध्यामागमद्रामः सुग्रीवहनूमदादिभिः।।18।।

āropya puṣpake sītāṃ vibhīṣaṇasahāyavān /
ayodhyāmāgamadrāmaḥ sugrīvahanūmadādibhiḥ //

Then he (Śrī Rāma) got aboard the air plane called Puṣpaka along with Sītā, Vibhīṣaṇa and others. The company departed for Ayodhyā accompanied also by Sugrīva, Hanumāna and others. (18).

[Note :—Though not mentioned specially, Lakṣmaṇa obviously had also accompanied Śrī Rāma back to Ayodhyā.]

आनन्दैर्योजयामास भ्रातन्मातृश्च बान्धवान्। राजा सर्वस्य लोकस्य प्रजानामनुरञ्जन्।।19।।

ānandairyojayāmāsa bhrātanmātṛśca bāndhavān /
rājā sarvasya lokasya prajānāmanurañjan //

Upon his return, he provided happiness to his brothers (Bharata and Śatrughna), mothers (Kauśalaya, Sumitrā and Kaikeyī) and his compatriots, peers, kith and kin as well as his subjects. He became renowned as an Emperor who gave cheer to the entire world, the kings who ruled over the land under him as well as the subjects who lived in the realm (19).

रामं राजानमासाद्य तिर्यञ्चोऽपि ययुर्मुदम्। देवदुन्दुभयो नेदुः सर्वदा हि नभस्तले।
ववृषुर्जलदाः काले पुष्पवृष्टिः पपात च।।20।।

rāmaṃ rājānamāsādya tiryañco'pi yayurmudam /
devadundubhayo neduḥ sarvadā hi nabhastale /
vavṛṣurjaladāḥ kāle puṣpavṛṣṭiḥ papāta ca //

Even the animals and birds were ecstatic and exhilarated on having Śrī Rāma as their Emperor King. There was a constant playing of kettle drums by the Gods in the sky (as a token of continuous atmosphere of joyous celebration and festivities). There were rains at the proper time (i.e. there was no drought, everywhere there was prosperity marked by abundance of rains and fertile soil, good crops and wellbeing), and flowers rained down ever so often from the sky (20).

Thus ends Canto 16 of the ancient epic called Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa written by sage Vālmīki describing briefly the killing of 10-headed Rāvaṇa and Śrī Rāma's coronation as the Emperor King of Ayodhyā and the consequent perpetual all round happiness everywhere.

* * *

Canto 17

Sītā unfolds the story about the senior 1000-headed Rāvaṇa in the court of Śrī Rāma

This is a fascinating canto marking the beginning of the real story of this book 'Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa' in which Sītā describes to the assembled sages the incident of her childhood when a wandering Brāhmin, who was on his way to a pilgrim site, was well travelled and knew about many things from many corners of the world, including about the 1000-headed Rāvaṇa, had made a stopover at her father's place. Janaka, her father, had deputed the young Sītā to serve the Brāhmin. He had told her about that Rāvaṇa. This Rāvaṇa was the senior one and was the elder brother of the 10-headed Rāvaṇa who was his younger sibling and the king of Laṅkā. The elder Rāvaṇa ruled in an island known as Puṣkara. Sītā told them about the existence of this senior Rāvaṇa because the sages had assembled in the royal court of Śrī Rāma after his coronation to honour him for his victory at Laṅkā, glorify his achievements of killing the 10-headed Rāvaṇa and lauding generously his glories. Sītā in essence meant to snub them that what Śrī Rāma achieved at Laṅkā was not worthy of so much praise, glorification and eulogising. This shows, in effect, that the sages were merely flattering Śrī Rāma as sweet-talking sycophants. This Canto acts as a prelude to the next half of this fascinating and wonderful version of the story of the Rāmāyaṇa which now describes the Great

War between Śrī Rāma and this senior 1000-headed Rāvaṇa of Puṣkara as unfolded in the subsequent Cantos.

प्राप्तराज्यस्य रामस्य राक्षसानां क्षये कृते। आजग्मुर्मुनयस्तत्र राघवं प्रति नन्दितुम।।1।।

prāptarājyasya rāmasya rākṣasānāṃ kṣaye kṛte/
ājagmurmunayastatra rāghavaṃ prati nanditu ma//

When the evil demons of Laṅkā had been killed and Śrī Rāma had been crowned as king emperor, all the senior sages and seers had come to the royal court of Śrī Rāma at Ayodhyā to honour him (1).

विश्वामित्रो यवक्रीतो रैभ्यश्च्यवन एव च। कण्वश्च मुनिशार्दूलो ये पूर्वा दिशमाश्रिताः।।2।।

viśvāmitro yavakrīto raibhyaścyavana eva ca/
kaṇvaśca muniśārdūlo ye pūrvā diśamāśritāḥ//

All the sages and seers who lived in the eastern direction of Ayodhyā, such as Viśvāmitra, Yavakrīt, Raibhya, Cyavana and Kaṇva, who were considered as being the lion amongst their peers, came there (2).

स्वस्त्यात्रेयश्च नमुचोऽरिमुचोगस्त्य एव च। आजग्मुर्मुनस्तत्र ये श्रिताः दक्षिणां दिशम्।।3।।

svastyātreyaśca namuco'rimucogastya eva ca/
ājagmurmunastatra ye śritāḥ dakṣiṇāṃ diśam//

From the south direction came sages Svasti, Ātreya, Namuca, Arimuca and Agastya (3).

उपगुः कामठो धूम्रो रौद्राश्वो मुनिपुङ्गवः। आजग्मुर्मुनयस्तत्र ये प्रतीचीं समाश्रिताः।।4।।

upaguḥ kāmaṭho dhūmro raudrāśvo munipuṅgavaḥ/
ājagmurmunayastatra ye pratīcīṃ samāśritāḥ//

From the western direction came the exalted sages Upagu, Kāmaṭha, Dhūmra, Raudrāśva and Ājagmu (4).

शिष्योपशिष्यसहिता वसिष्ठाप्रमुखर्षयः। आजग्मुहिं महात्मानं उत्तरां दिशमाश्रिताः।।5।।

śiṣyopaśiṣyasahitā vasiṣṭhāpramukharṣayaḥ/
ājagmuhiṃ mahātmānaṃ uttarāṃ diśamāśritāḥ//

From the north arrived sages Vasiṣṭha and others along with their senior disciples and their junior ones (5).

प्राप्यते तु महात्मानो राघवस्य निवेशनम्। गृहीत्वा फलमूलानि हुताशसमविग्रहाः।।6।।
राघवं प्रतिनन्द्याथ विविशुः परमासने।। 6½।।

prāpyate tu mahātmāno rāghavasya niveśanam /
gṛhītvā phalamūlāni hutāśasamavigrahāḥ //
rāghavaṃ pratinandyātha viviśuḥ paramāsane /

All the great souls (sages and seers) came to the palace of Rāghava (Śrī Rāma) and accepted his welcoming gesture by taking fruits and flowers. They prayed their respects to Rāghava who was radiant and glorious like a splendours fire. They all simultaneously honoured him. All of them took their seats at a high place specially designated for special and respected guests (6-6½).

राघवश्च महातेजाः सीतया सह सुव्रतः ।।7।।
भ्रातृभिर्मन्त्रिभिः सार्द्धं पौरैः श्रेणिमुखैस्तथा। विनीत उपसङ्गम्य पूजयामास तान्मुनीन्।।8।।

rāghavaśca mahātejāḥ sītayā saha suvratah //
bhrātṛbhirmantribhiḥ sārddhaṃ pauraiḥ śreṇimukhaistathā /
vinīta upasaṅgamya pūjayāmāsa tānmunīn //

Sage Vālmīki said to sage Bhāradvāja who was listening to the story from the sage, 'Oh the righteous one ! The most glorious and radiant Rāghava (Śrī Rāma) met those sages politely with due reverence and showing great respect to them; he was joined by Sītā, his brothers, ministers and all the senior citizen of the city (who had assembled in the court for the occasion) to welcome them with humility, and they worshipped the sages together (7-8).

अगस्त्यप्रमुखा विप्रा दिष्ट्यादिष्ट्यैति चाब्रुवन। राघवं प्रशशंसुस्ते मुनयो वाग्विदां वराः ।।9।।

agastyapramukhā viprā diṣṭyādiṣṭayaiti cābruvana /
rāghavaṃ praśaśaṃsuste munayo vāgvidāṃ varāḥ //

Those sages who were articulate speakers and expert orators, led by sage Agastya, were very pleased and exhilarated in their hearts. They thanked him (Śrī Rāma) profusely for his welcoming gestures. They lauded the glories of Rāghava (Śrī Rāma) and praised him (9).

त्वं हि देवो जगन्नाथो जगतामुमकारकः। रावणस्य सपुत्रस्य सामात्यस्य वधात्प्रभो।।10।।
जगदेतन्महाबाहो पुनर्जातमिवाभवत्। न रावणादभ्यधिको दुष्टो लोकभयंकरः।।11।।

tvaṃ hi devo jagannātho jagatāmumakārakaḥ /
rāvaṇasya saputrasya sāmātyasya vadhātprabho //
jagadetanmahābāho punarjātamivābhavat /
na rāvaṇādabhyadhiko duṣṭo lokabhayaṃkaraḥ //

They said, 'Oh Lord Jagannātha (literally, the Lord of the world)! You are a benevolent benefactor of the world. Oh Lord ! By the death of the 10-headed Rāvaṇa along with his sons and ministers, it appears that the world has got a fresh lease of life, or has got a new life altogether, as it were. There was no one more wicked, evil, pervert, fearful and horrifying for this world than the evil and wicked Rāvaṇa (10-11).

दशास्यैर्दशदिक्कार्यमाज्ञापयति राक्षसः। स दशास्यो हतो राम दिष्ट्या च जगदुद्धृतम्।।12।।

daśāsyairdaśadikkāryamājñāpayati rākṣasaḥ /
sa daśāsyo hato rāma diṣṭyā ca jagaduddhṛtam //

This demon's orders were obeyed in all the 10 directions of the world (i.e. he was never disobeyed by anyone anywhere). Fortunately, by slaying him, you have liberated the world from his cruelty, viciousness and torments (12).

भगवानसि भूपाल ब्रह्मणाभ्यर्थितः पुरा। पुण्डरीकविशालाक्षः श्याम आजानुबाहुकः।।13।।

bhagavānasi bhūpāla brahmaṇābhyarthitaḥ purā /
puṇḍarīkaviśālākṣaḥ śyāma ājānubāhukaḥ //

You have manifested yourself as the protector and sustainer of the earth (i.e. you have become a king or Bhūpāla) on the prayers or request of Brahmā, the creator, made in some ancient time. Your eyes are large like the lotus flower, you have a dark complexioned body and long arms that stretch right up to your thighs (13).

अयोध्यां प्रादुरभूदिक्ष्वाकुकुलनन्दनः। त्वद्दर्शनान्महाबाहो निर्वृता स्मो वयं प्रभो।।14।।

ayodhyāṃ prādurabhūdikṣvākukulanandanaḥ /
tvaddarśanānmahābāho nirvṛtā smo vayaṃ prabho //

You have revealed yourself in Ayodhyā to provide happiness and joys to the clan of Ikṣvāku (who was one of the ancestors of Śrī Rāma). Oh Lord! We have become exhilarated and joyous by merely having your august and divine sight, called Darśana (14).

[Note :—The word 'Darśana' is different from merely 'seeing', for the former involves devotions and a sense of reverence. One experiences spiritual peace and elevation when one comes in direct communion with a divine, pious and holy being, such as a saint. A person can have Darśana of his chosen deity even with closed eyes, or while sleeping. This is obviously distinct from mere physical seeing which has no element of emotive attachment or any sense of reverence and devotion for the object seen.]

तपश्चरामः सहितास्त्वत्प्रसादाद्वनेवने। किन्तु सीता महादेवी प्रापं दुखं महत्प्रभो।।15।।

tapaścarāmaḥ sahitāstvatprasādādvanevane/
kintu sītā mahādevī prāpaṃ dukhaṃ mahatprabho//

By your grace and kindness (i.e. by your benevolent protection), we are able to do 'Tapa' (austerity, penances and observance of religious sacraments, doing fire sacrifices and keeping stern religious vows) fearlessly in the different forests where we live. But oh Lord, the great Goddess Sītā has suffered a lot (15).

तदेव स्मर्यमाणं सच्चित्तमुद्वेजयेद्धि नः। एतमुक्ते तु मुनिभिः सानुक्रोशं पुनः पुनः।।16।।

tadeva smaryamāṇaṃ saccittamudvejayeddhi naḥ/
etamukte tu munibhiḥ sānukrośaṃ punaḥ punaḥ//

When we remember about her sufferings, we feel very regretful and our minds become restless'. The sages repeatedly expressed their anguish at the sorrowful period through which Sītā had to pass during her 14 year exile in the forest, including the horrible period of torments after her abduction by Rāvaṇa (16).

जहास मधुरं साध्वी सीता जनकनन्दिनी। उवाच सस्मितं देवी तान्मुनीन्मितभाषिणी।।17।।
मुनयो यद्यदुक्तं हि रावणस्य वधं प्रति। परिहास इवाभाति प्रशंसनमिदं द्विजाः।।18।।

jahāsa madhuraṃ sādhvī sītā janakanandinī/
uvāca sasmitaṃ devī tānmunīnmitabhāṣiṇī//
munayo yadyaduktaṃ hi rāvaṇasya vadhaṃ prati/
parihāsa ivābhāti praśaṃsanamidaṃ dvijāḥ//

At this, the most holy and pious Sītā, the daughter of Janaka, smiled sweetly but sarcastically and curtly said to them with a cheerful sneer on her face (17), 'Oh Brāhmins! Whatever the great sages have said just now in praise of Śrī Rāma regarding the slaying of Rāvaṇa is nothing but a joke said in amusement! [That is, all these eulogies, praises and honours that have been heaped upon Śrī Rāma to celebrate and laud his victory over the 10-headed Rāvaṇa of Laṅkā, does not deserve so much attention. It was not such a great feat as to invite so much acclaim from you all. These laurels seem to be misplaced and exaggerated'.] (18) [17-18]

रावणो हि दुराचारः सत्यमेव न संशयः। दशभिर्वदनैर्वीरो जगदुद्वेजको हि सः।।19।।

rāvaṇo hi durācāraḥ satyameva na saṃśayaḥ/
daśabhirvadanairvīro jagadudvejako hi saḥ//

It is also fact and truth that Rāvaṇa was very evil, pervert and wicked. There is also no doubt that the brave one with 10-heads tormented no end and subjected the world to great horrors (19).

दशास्यस्य वधो विप्रा न प्रशंसामिहार्हति। एतच्छ्रुत्वा तु मुनयो विस्मयं परमं गताः ।। 20 ।।
daśāsyasya vadho viprā na praśaṃsāmihārhati /
etacchrutvā tu munayo vismayaṃ paramaṃ gatāḥ //

But oh Brāhmins, the killing of this 10-headed Rāvaṇa is not something to be so greatly lauded, glorified and honoured'. Hearing her chastising words, the sages were very astonished and mystified (20).

किमेतदिति होचुस्ते परस्परमुखेक्षणाः। अयोनिसम्भवा सीता काकुत्स्थकुलमाश्रिता ।। 21 ।।
अस्मानपि जहासेयं किमेतन्नैव विद्महे ।। 21½ ।।
kimetaditi hocuste parasparamukhekṣaṇāḥ /
ayonisambhavā sītā kākutsthakulamāśritā //
asmānapi jahāseyaṃ kimetannaiva vidyahe /

Stunned at the rebuke, they glanced at each other in amazement, saying, 'What is this! Sītā, who has been accepted by the clan of king Ikṣvāku which has given her shelter and protection, is expressing her mirth on what we say; she seems sarcastic and scornful and not amused at all at our lauding Śrī Rāma for the great and stupendous feat of killing such a formidable enemy as the great demon Rāvaṇa. She, on the contrary, ridicules us. We don't know the reason for it' (21-21½).

तच्छ्रुत्वा वचनं तेषां मुनीना भावितात्मनाम् ।। 22 ।।
सीता भीता प्रणम्योचै कृताञ्जलिपुटा सती। पृथग्जनेव मुनयो नाहमनृतभार्षिणी ।।23।।
यदि चाज्ञापयथ मां तदा वक्ष्यामि चादितः ।। 23½ ।।
tacchrutvā vacanaṃ teṣāṃ munīnā bhāvitātmanām //
sītā bhītā praṇamyocai kṛtāñjalipuṭā satī /
pṛthagjaneva munayo nāhamanṛtabhārṣiṇī //
yadi cājñāpayatha māṃ tadā vakṣyāmi cāditaḥ /

When Sītā heard some stern words being uttered for her by the learned sages, she became a little scared (because she feared that the sages would think she was proud and over jealous, was being insulting towards not only her husband Śrī Rāma but also towards great sages which was in itself a horrible and unpardonable offence, and they could curse her for her temerity and impoliteness). So, the immaculate and uncorrupt Sītā joined her hands politely and submissively, bowed before them (the sages), and said most humbly, 'Oh sages! I am not a liar like an ordinary, lowly person (22-23). If you give me your permission, I shall narrate everything to you from the beginning' (23½). [22-23½]

अगस्त्यप्रमुखा विप्राः सीताया विनयान्वितम्।। 24।।
आकर्ण्य वचनं प्रीताः प्रोचुस्ते कथ्यतामिति। ततः सीता महाभागा प्रवक्तुमुपचक्रमे।। 25।।

agastyapramukhā viprāḥ sītāyā vinayānvitam //
ākarṇya vacanaṃ prītāḥ procuste kathyatāmiti /
tataḥ sītā mahābhāgā pravaktumupacakrame //

Then sage Agastya and other chief sages, upon hearing what Sītā had politely requested them, agreed, and asked her to narrate the entire episode (24). At this, the great Sītā started her narration (25). [24-25]

पति मुनीन्देवरांश्च मन्त्रिणः श्रोणिमुख्यकान्। नियेनाभ्यनुज्ञाप्य पूर्ववृत्तान्तमादरात्।। 26।।

pati munīndevarāṃśca mantriṇaḥ śroṇimukhyakān /
niyenābhyanujñāpya pūrvavṛttāntamādarāt //

She took permission from her husband, Śrī Rāma, the sages, her brothers-in-law, ministers and other elders present in the royal court and described the earlier event of her childhood (26).

पूर्वं विवाहात्मुनयो यदासं पितृमन्दिरे। तदैकोऽतिथिरूपेण ब्राह्मणः समुपागतः।।27।।
आगत्य पितरं मह्यं तमुवाच द्विजोत्तमः। चतुरो वार्षिकान्मासान्स्थस्यामि तव मन्दिरे।।28।।
यदि सेवापरो नित्यं भवस्यमरसन्निभः।। 28½।।

pūrvaṃ vivāhātmunayo yadāsaṃ pitṛmandire /
tadaiko'tithirūpeṇa brāhmaṇaḥ samupāgataḥ //
āgatya pitaraṃ mahyaṃ tamuvāca dvijottamaḥ /
caturo vārṣikānmāsānsthasyāmi tava mandire //
yadi sevāparo nityaṃ bhavasyamarasannibhaḥ /

'Oh sages! Before my marriage, when I lived with my father at his palace (at Janakapura), a Brāhmin arrived there as a guest of my father (27). That exalted Brāhmin came to my father and said, 'I shall stay here for a period of four months in your temple (28). Oh king! If you remain in my service diligently during this period, you shall be blessed by a stature which would be equivalent to being immortal' (28½). [27-28½]

जनको मत्पिता देवद्विजभक्तिपरायणः ।।29।।
ब्राह्मणं वासयामास नानाभक्ष्यं समादिशत्। अहं च तस्य सेवायै नियुक्ता धर्मभीरुणा।।30।।

janako matpitā devadvijabhaktiparāyaṇaḥ //
brāhmaṇaṃ vāsayāmāsa nānābhakṣyaṃ samādiśat /
ahaṃ ca tasya sevāyai niyuktā dharmabhīruṇā //

My Father was very devoted to Brāhmins and Gods (29). That Brāhmin was provided with ample food and other necessities of life. My Father was humble and he feared for righteousness, probity and propriety not being violated and compromised. So he appointed me on his behalf to serve that gentlemen Brāhmin (29-30).

यदा यथाज्ञापयति द्विजः स परमार्थवित्। तं तथा ह्यकरवं तस्य रात्रिंदिवमतन्द्रिता।।31।।

yadā yathājñāpayati dvijaḥ sa paramārthavit /
taṃ tathā hyakaravaṃ tasya rātriṃdivamatandritā //

That Brāhmin was spiritually enlightened and attained one. Whatever he ordered me, I carried out his orders carefully and diligently day and night without any negligence or showing leniency on my part (31).

नानातीर्थाभिगमनं कृतं तेन महात्मना। तत्रत्याश्च यथाश्चित्राः श्रावयामास मां द्विजः।।32।।

nānātīrthābhigamanaṃ kṛtaṃ tena mahātmanā /
tatratyāśca yathāścitrāḥ śrāvayāmāsa māṃ dvijaḥ //

That great soul had roamed (visited) in many pilgrim sites. He told me numerous stories about so many pilgrim places in the world which he had visited during his wanderings to keep me entertained and happy (32).

सेवया मम धैर्येण चानुकूल्येन तर्पितः। कदाचिद्ब्राह्मणश्रेष्ठः प्रियभाषी यदात्थ माम्।।33।।

sevayā mama dhairyeṇa cānukūlyena tarpitaḥ /
kadācidbrāhmaṇaśreṣṭhaḥ priyabhāṣī yadāttha mām //

That exalted Brāhmin was pleased by my service, patience and pleasing demeanours. So one day he cheerfully told me something which was hitherto not known to us (33).

तद्वोऽहमभिधास्यामि शृणुत द्विजपुङ्गवाः। एकदा प्रातरुत्थाय कृतमैत्रः कृताह्निकः।।34।।
सीते इति समाभाष्य प्रवक्तुमुपचक्रमे। शृणु सीते मया दुष्टमाश्चर्य कमलानने।।35।।

tadvo'hamabhidhāsyāmi śṛṇuta dvijapuṅgavāḥ /
ekadā prātarutthāya kṛtamaitraḥ kṛtāhikaḥ //
sīte iti samābhāṣya pravaktumupacakrame /
śṛṇu sīte mayā duṣṭamāścarya kamalānane //

Whatever he told me, oh the most exalted Brāhmins (or sages), I shall now describe it to you. One day, after getting up in the morning and finishing his morning rituals (34), he called me aside and began his narration—'Oh lotus-eyed Sītā. Listen to the astonishing and astounding, mysterious and strange things that I have seen during my wanderings (35). [34-35]

दधिमण्डोदकाब्धेश्च परः स्वादूदकोब्धिकः। पुष्करद्वीपमावृत्य वर्तते वलयाकृतिः।।36।।
dadhimaṇḍodakābdheśca paraḥ svādūdakobdhikaḥ /
puṣkaradvīpamāvṛtya vartate valayākṛtiḥ //

Beyond the ocean of curd, whey or buttermilk, scum or spume and water, there is an ocean of sweet water which surrounds the island known as 'Puṣkaradvīpa' like a ring or moat girdling it from all the sides (36).

पुष्करं पुष्करे दृष्टं महावहिशिखोज्जवलम्। पत्रायुतायुतयुतं ब्रह्मणः परमासनम्।।37।।
puṣkaraṃ puṣkare dṛṣṭaṃ mahāvahiśikhojjavalam /
patrāyutāyutayutaṃ brahmaṇaḥ paramāsanam //

In that island (or a small continent) called Puṣkara, there is a divine glorious lotus having 10,000 petals, which is radiant and glowing like a flame or filament of a great fire burning splendourously. Upon this great lotus, there is the exalted seat of Brahmā, the creator (37).

तदद्वीपवर्षयोर्मध्ये मानसोत्तरसंज्ञकः। मर्यादापर्वतो दैर्घ्ये चायामेऽयुतयोजनः।।38।।
taddvīpavarṣayormadhye mānasottarasaṃjñakaḥ /
maryādāparvato dairghye cāyāme'yutayojanaḥ //

At the center of that island, there is a great mountain called 'Maryādā'. It is regarded to be as of the same stature as the mountain on the northern banks of the lake called Mānasasarovara (a reference to mount Kailāśa, the abode of Śiva in the Himālayas). It covers an area of 10,000 Yojanas (38).

[Note :—1 Yojana = 6, 8 or 16 miles according to different scales of measurement. However, the median figure of 8 miles is generally regarded as being equivalent to 1 Yojana. See also verse no. 46.]

तच्छैलस्य चतुर्दिक्षु इन्द्रादीनां पुराणि हि। क्रीडार्थं निर्मितान्येषां महान्ति विश्वकर्मणा।।39।।

tacchailasya caturdikṣu indrādīnāṃ purāṇi hi/
krīḍārthaṃ nirmitānyeṣāṃ mahānti viśvakarmaṇā //

In all the four directions of that mountain, there are the abodes of Indra and other Gods which the great architect of Gods, Viśvakarmā, had created for their sportful activities, or for their residence where they can have all possible comforts (39).

सुमाली राक्षसश्रेष्ठो कैकसी नाम तत्सुता। मुनेर्विश्रवसः पत्नी सा सुत रावणद्वयम्।।40।।
एकः सहस्रवदनो द्वितीयो दशवक्त्रकः। जन्मकाले सुरैरुक्तमाकाशे रावणद्वयम्।।41।।
लोकानां रावणाज्जातं नागयौगिकमेतयोः।। 41½।।

sumālī rākṣasaśreṣṭho kaikasī nāma tatsutā /
munerviśravasaḥ patnī sā suta rāvaṇadvayam //
ekaḥ sahasravadano dvitīyo daśavaktrakaḥ /
janmakāle surairuktamākāśe rāvaṇadvayam //
lokānāṃ rāvaṇājjātaṃ nāgayaugikametayoḥ /

Sumālī, who was the best and the most superior amidst the demon race, had a daughter named Kaikasī. She became the wife of sage Viśravā and produced two sons, each one called Rāvaṇa (40). One had a thousand faces (heads) and the other one had ten faces (heads). At the time of their birth, the Gods had declared from the heavens that there would be two Rāvaṇas (41). Though there are two Rāvaṇas born in this world, both had the same name (41½). [40-41½]

कनिष्ठो दशकण्ठोऽयं शितिकण्ठप्रसादतः।।42।।
लङ्कामधिवसत्येष धनदेन विनिर्मिताम्। ब्रह्मणो वरदानेन त्रिलोकीमवमन्यते।।43।।

kaniṣṭho daśakaṇṭho'yaṃ śitikaṇṭhaprasādataḥ //
laṅkāmadhivasatyeṣa dhanadena vinirmitām /
brahmaṇo varadānena trilokīmavamanyate //

The 10-headed one, who was the younger sibling of the two, lived in the city of Laṅkā, which was constructed by Kubera, by the grace of Lord Śiva. By the boons given to him by Brahmā, the creator, he treated all the three worlds (the nether, the terrestrial, and the celestial) with utter contempt (42-43).

श्रेष्ठः सहस्रवदनो रावणो लोकरावणः। स्वाभाविकबलेनासौ पुष्करद्वीपमाश्रितः।।44।।

śreṣṭhaḥ sahasravadano rāvaṇo lokarāvaṇaḥ /
svābhāvikabalenāsau puṣkaradvīpamāśritaḥ //

Out of them, the Rāvaṇa who was 1000-headed, senior of the two and who had made the world weep and wail by his vicious and tyrannical habits, took a residence in an island or a small continent called Puṣkara (44).

सूर्याचन्द्रमसो गृह्यं क्रीडेत्कन्दुकलीलया। कुलाचलान्समुद्गृह्य कन्दुकं क्रीडते हि सः ।।45।।

sūryācandramaso gṛhyaṃ krīḍetkandukalīlayā /
kulācalānsamudgṛhya kandukaṃ krīḍate hi saḥ //

He can use the Sun and the Moon as balls to play a game of soccer, and he uses great immovable mountains called Kulācala to play football (45).

मानसोत्तरशैलस्य चतुर्दिक्षु पुराणि हि। आच्छिद्य संगृहीतानि दिगीशानां महात्मनाम् ।।46।।

mānasottaraśailasya caturdikṣu purāṇi hi /
ācchidya saṃgṛhītāni digīśānāṃ mahātmanām //

All the divine mountainous abodes of Gods lying to the north of the Mānasasarovara Lake (see also verse no. 38) have been breached and conquered by him, and all their great Lords, the various Dikpālas, have been collectively subjugated by him (46).

तत्रैव रमते राजा मातामहकुलैः सह। तत्रैन्द्री या पुरी रम्या स स्वयं तत्र तिष्ठति।।47।।

tatraiva ramate rājā mātāmahakulaiḥ saha /
tatraindrī yā purī ramyā sa svayaṃ tatra tiṣṭhati //

He lives and enjoys life there (at Puṣkara) along with the members of his race (demons) belonging to his mother's side. This is a charming and magnificent city belonging to Indra, the king of Gods. He (the 1000-headed Rāvaṇa) lives there (47).

[Note :—His mother Kaikasī was the daughter of the demon race while his father was a sage named Viśravā. See verse no. 40. The episode of Rāvaṇa's birth and how this sage came to become the husband of Kaikasī has been described in detail in 'Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa' by Veda Vyāsa in its Uttara Kāṇḍa, canto 1, an English version of which has been published separately by this humble author.]

अन्यान्यन्येभ्य एवादान्मन्त्रिभ्य राक्षसाधिपः। विशेषतोऽलंकृता सा पुरी परमदुर्लभा।।48।।

anyānyanyebhya evādānmantribhyo rākṣasādhipaḥ /
viśeṣato'laṃkṛtā sā purī paramadurlabhā //

That king of demons (thousand headed Rāvaṇa) bestowed ministerial honours to many. That city is most inaccessible for other creatures (except the demons). It has been especially decorated and pepped up by him to stand out prominently amongst all other cities of great rulers (48).

जगतां सारमाकृष्य यथास्थानं सुमण्डिता। चम्पकाशोकमन्दारकदलीप्रियकार्जुनैः ।।49।।
पाटलाशोकजम्बूभिः कोविदारैश्च चन्दनैः। पनसैः सालतालैश्च तमालैर्देवादारुभिः ।।50।।
वकुलैः पारिजातैश्च कल्पवृक्षैरलंकृता। अन्यैश्च विविधैर्वृक्षैः सर्वर्तुकुसुमोज्ज्वलैः ।।51।।

jagatāṃ sāramākṛṣya yathāsthānaṃ sumaṇḍitā /
campakāśokamandārakadalīpriyakārjunaiḥ //
pāṭalāśokajambūbhiḥ kovidāraiśca candanaiḥ /
panasaiḥ sālatālaiśca tamālairdevādārubhiḥ //
vakulaiḥ pārijātaiśca kalpavṛkṣairalaṃkṛtā /
anyaiśca vividhairvṛkṣaiḥ sarvartukusumojjvalaiḥ //

It has been constructed by using the best of things available in this world. It is bedecked with numerous varieties of flowers and trees—such as Campaka (magnolia, or *Mechelia Champacca*), Aśoka, Mandāra (swallow wart; *Calotrapis Gigantea*), Kadalī (the plantain tree), Priyaka (any charming flower), Arjuna (*Terminalia Alatagabra),* Pāṭalā (the trumpet tree), Jambū (the black plum and Varuṇa trees), Kovidāra (conifer), Candana (sandalwood), Panasa (jackfruit), Sāla (the cypress tree), Tamāla (the black catechu), Tāla (palm), Devdāru (the fig tree), Vakula (the lilac) Pārijāta (the coral jasmine; *Nyctanthes Arbor Tristis;* or Harisiṅgāra) and the Kalpataru (an evergreen tree of Gods). Besides these trees, it is decorated with so many other trees and flowering plants that blossom in all the seasons throughout the year (49-51).

दिव्यगन्धरसैर्दिव्यैः सर्वर्तुफलसंयुतैः। भ्रमरैः कोकिलैर्नावर्णपक्षिभिरुज्ज्वला ।।52।।

divyagandharasairdivyaiḥ sarvartuphalasaṃyutaiḥ /
bhramaraiḥ kokilairnāvarṇapakṣibhirujjvalā //

There are trees there which are laden with succulent, ripe and juicy fruits giving out a sweet aroma; these trees are perinnial and grow around the year in all the seasons. Birds and insects of different varieties, such as bees, cuckoo and others are cheerfully humming, buzzing and chirping around on those trees (52).

शातकौम्भमयैः कैश्चित्कैश्चिदग्निशिखोपमैः। नीलाञ्चननिभैश्चान्यैः शोभिता वरपादपैः ।।53।।

śātakaumbhamayaiḥ kaiścitkaiścidagniśikhopamaiḥ /
nīlāñcananibhaiścānyaiḥ śobhitā varapādapaiḥ //

Mountains and hills made of gold, or those which are golden in colour like the flame of a fire or are bluish in hue like the light blue sky, adorn the place here and there (like gems studded in an ornament). Tall and pleasant looking trees adorn these mountains and hills (53).

दीर्घिकाः सति बह्व्योऽत्र जल पूर्णा महोदयाः । महार्हमणिसोपानः स्फाटिकान्तरकुट्टिमाः ।।54।।

dīrghikāḥ sati bahvyo'tra jala pūrṇā mahodayāḥ /
mahārhamaṇisopānaḥ sphāṭikāntarakuṭṭimāḥ //

There are a number of large water bodies such as ponds, lakes, rivers, wells, tanks etc. there, which are accessed by steps studded with gems and jewels, precious stones and crystals (54).

फुल्लपद्मोत्पलवनाश्चक्रवाकोपशोभिताः । दात्यूहगणसंघुष्टा हंससारसनोदिताः ।।55।।

phullapadmotpalavanāścakravākopaśobhitāḥ /
dātyūhagaṇasaṃghuṣṭā haṃsasārasanoditāḥ //

These water bodies look very pleasant and beautiful because they are surrounded and adorned by a dense growth of lotus flowers with open petals, which are blooming in their pristine beauty. The dense groves, orchards, gardens, bowers, arbours, alcoves etc are adorned with chirping and frolicking birds such as swans, ruddy goose etc. (55).

तत्र तत्रावनेर्देशा वैदूर्यमणिसन्निभाः । शार्दूलैः परमोपेताः सुखार्थमुपकल्पिताः ।।56।।

tatra tatrāvanerdeśā vaidūryamaṇisannibhāḥ /
śārdūlaiḥ paramopetāḥ sukhārthamupakalpitāḥ //

The countryside that has these forests is adorned with precious stones known as 'Vaidūryamaṇi', also called Lahasūnīya. There are lions and tigers in abundance there. These forests, infested with such wild animals, have been created for pleasure, enjoyment and sport (56).

सर्वर्तुसुखदा रम्याः पुंस्कोकिलकलरवाः । ये वृक्षा नन्दनेऽतिष्टन् ये च चैत्रवने स्थिताः ।।57।।
मन्दरेऽन्येषु शैलेषु ते वृक्षास्तत्र सन्स्थिताः ।। 57½ ।।

sarvartusukhadā ramyāḥ puṃskokilakalaravāḥ /
ye vṛkṣā nandane'tiṣṭan ye ca caitravane sthitāḥ //
mandare'nyeṣu śaileṣu te vṛkṣāstatra sansthitāḥ /

All the charming and beautiful trees that provide comfort and cheer in all the seasons the year round, and where the male cuckoos frolic around, are present there. These trees have been collected from as far afield as Nandanavana, Caitravana and Mt. Mandrācala (57-57½).

नानामणिमयी भूमिर्मुक्ताजालमयी तथा।।58।।
विचित्रबद्धसोपानप्रसादैरुपशोभिता। पुरद्वारसमाकीर्णा पुरी परमशोभना।।59।।

nānāmaṇimayī bhūmirmuktājālamayī tathā //
vicitrabaddhasopānaprasādairupaśobhitā /
puradvārasamākīrṇā purī paramaśobhanā //

This land (country of Puṣkara) is adorned with magnificent and strange palaces whose steps are studded with different gems, jewels and precious stones upon which are laid latticed mattings made of pearls. The most fascinating and charming city is surrounded by gates on all the sides (58-59).

न दैवेरनुभूयेत स्वर्गिभिर्नानुभूयते। तत्पुरीस्थितिमाकांक्ष्य तपः कुर्वन्ति सत्तमाः।।60।।

na daiveranubhūyeta svargibhirnānubhūyate /
tatpurīsthitimākāṃkṣya tapaḥ kurvanti sattamāḥ //

Neither the Gods nor any other residents of the heavens can ever imagine and experience its glory, majesty, pomp and splendour. Not only has this, but even great souls (such as enlightened and wise demons) do Tapa (severe penances and austerities) there to obtain permanence and stability. [That is, unlike the city of Laṅkā where none of the demons pursue any religious or spiritual activities to ensure its long term good as well as of their own welfare, there are many such activities going on at Puṣkara Island where the 1000-headed Rāvaṇa lives. He has done it to ensure that the city and its residents are given protection from the wrath of sages and hermits because of the shield provided to the city by performance of many religious activities there, such as doing Tapa] (60).

तस्यां सहस्त्रवदनो रावणो राक्षसाधिपः। आस्ते जगद्वशीकृत्य हेलया बाहु लीलया।।61।।

tasyāṃ sahasravadano rāvaṇo rākṣasādhipaḥ /
āste jagadvaśīkṛtya helayā bāhu līlayā //

The king of that place is the thousand headed Rāvaṇa who is the great king of demons. He has conquered the whole world by the strength of his arms (61).

इन्द्रादींस्त्रिदशान्सर्वान्गले बद्धा स किन्नरान्। गन्धर्वानन्दानवान्भीमान्सर्पान्विद्याधरांस्तथा।।62।।

बालक्रीडनया क्रीडन्मेरुं मन्येत सर्षपम्। गोष्पदं मन्यते चाब्धि सर्वलोकांस्तृणोपमान्।।63।।
द्वीपांल्लोष्टसमान्वीरो न किञ्चिद्गणयनदृशा।। 63½।।

indrādīṃstridaśānsarvāngale baddhā sa kinnarān /
gandharvānandānavānbhīmānsarpānvidyādharāṃstathā //
bālakrīḍanayā krīḍanmeruṃ manyeta sarṣapam /
goṣpadaṃ manyate cābdhi sarvalokāṃstṛṇopamān //
dvīpāṃllosṭasamānvīro na kiñcidgaṇayanadṛśā /

He has conquered Indra and other Gods, Kinnaras (celestial singers and dancers), Gandharvas (celestial musicians), Dānavas (demons; non-Gods), ferocious serpents (representing creatures of the subterranean and nether worlds) and Vidyādharas (junior Gods who are better then Kinnaras and Gandharvas) etc. He plays with them (instead of tormenting them and holding them in his prison as captives and trophies of conquest). He treats Mt. Meru as if it were a mustard seed, the ocean as if it is a shallow depression caused in soft earth by a cow's hoof, and the rest of the world as a mere blade of grass or reed or twig. He regards the continents and islands as nothing more than clods of Mud and pays no bother to brave and valiant ones, no matter how strong, valiant and potent they are (62-63½).

स यदा सर्वलोकानां त्रासने समुपारभत्।।64।।
तदा पितामहोऽभ्येत्य पुलस्त्यो विश्रवास्तथा। न्यवारयन्यत्नस्ततं तातवत्सेति भाषकः।।65।।

sa yadā sarvalokānāṃ trāsane samupārabhat //
tadā pitāmaho'bhyetya pulastyo viśravāstathā /
nyavārayanyatnastataṃ tātavatseti bhāṣakaḥ //

When he became too reckless, uncontrollable and belligerent, and started to torment the world in a ferocious and horrifying manner, his grandfather Pulastya and his father Viśravā went to him and tried to appease him with polite pampering, using most endearing words such as 'son, dear' etc. to calm him down and some how dissuade him from acting recklessly and unrighteously. They tried their best to put a restraint on him (64-65).

एवं स रावणो देवि सहस्त्रवदनो महान्। पुष्करद्वीपमासाद्य वर्तते जनकात्मजे।।66।।
तस्यानुजो दशास्योऽयं लङ्कायां जानकी स्थितः।। 67।।

evaṃ sa rāvaṇo devi sahasravadano mahān /
puṣkaradvīpamāsādya vartate janakātmaje //
tasyānujo daśāsyo'yaṃ laṅkāyāṃ jānakī sthitaḥ //

Oh Goddess, the daughter of Janaka (i.e. Sītā)! This is the way that great 1000-headed Rāvaṇa lives in the island called Puṣkara (66). And, oh Jānakī, his younger brother (the 10-headed Rāvaṇa) lives in Laṅkā' (67). [66-67]

चित्राणीत्यादीनि मे शंसयित्वा विप्रो मासाश्चतुरो यापयित्वा।
राजानं मां चाशिषा योजयित्वा जगामैकः प्रोषितस्तीर्थयात्राम्।। 68।।

citrāṇītyādīni me śaṃsayitvā vipro māsāścaturo yāpayitvā /
rājānaṃ māṃ cāśiṣā yojayitvā jagāmaikaḥ proṣitastīrthayātrām //

Sītā continued with the narration; she said, 'Living there for four months during which he had told me many such fascinating and magnificent stories, that guest Brāhmin blessed the king (my father Janaka) and me, and then he went away for pilgrimage to other holy sites' (68).

Thus ends Canto 17 of the ancient epic called Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa
written by sage Vālmīki describing the birth and the city of the
1000-headed Rāvaṇa of Puṣkara.

* * *

Canto 18

Śrī Rāma goes on a mission to conquer the 1000-headed Rāvaṇa of Puṣkara; the description of the demon army

When Sītā snubbed the sages for praising Śrī Rāma's victory over the 10-headed Rāvaṇa, saying that when a more formidable and many times more stronger elder brother of Rāvaṇa, the 1000-headed sibling with the same name, still lives, such praise is uncalled for and smacks of flattery. Taking up the cue as a challenge to his authority and supremacy as well as his potent and strength, Śrī Rāma collected his army of men, monkeys (the companions of Sugrīva) and demons (the companions of Vibhīṣaṇa) and launched the offensive against the 1000-headed Rāvaṇa. When the senior Rāvaṇa heard that a war cry has been sounded in his kingdom, his demon forces rushed out to meet the challenge posed by the invading army of Śrī Rāma.

This Canto describes in detail the arms that they carried with them and lists the individual names of the demons generals and commanders.

एवं स रावणो विप्राः सहस्रवदनो महान्। प्रोक्तस्तेन द्विजेनाहं श्रुत्वाश्चर्य च विस्मिता।।1।।

evaṃ sa rāvaṇo viprāḥ sahasravadano mahān/
proktastena dvijenāhaṃ śrutvāścarya ca vismitā//

Sītā said, 'Oh great sages! That Brāhmin told me this story of a 1000-headed Rāvaṇa, and I was very amazed and awed when I heard it (1).

अद्यापि तन्मम हृदि जागरूकं हि वर्तते। पत्या मे बाहुवीर्येण दशास्यो रावणो हतः।।2।।

adyāpi tanmama hṛdi jāgarūkaṃ hi vartate/
patyā me bāhuvīryeṇa daśāsyo rāvaṇo hataḥ//

Even till this day, that story is live in my heart; he (the 1000-headed Rāvaṇa) is virtually alive in my heart; I cannot forget him. My husband (Śrī Rāma) has been able to slay the 10-headed Rāvaṇa by the strength and potent of his arms (2).

सानुगः ससुतामात्यः सभ्रातृकः सबान्धवः। मत्कृते च पुरी दग्धा सेतुर्बद्धश्च वारिधौ।।3।।

sānugaḥ sasutāmātyaḥ sabhrātṛkaḥ sabāndhavaḥ/
matkṛte ca purī dagdhā seturbaddhaśca vāridhau//

He (the 10-headed junior Rāvaṇa) was killed along with his sons, followers, brother, kith and kin. To rescue me, his city (Laṅkā) was burnt to ashes and a bridge was constructed across the ocean (3).

सुग्रीवेण सहायेन तथा हनूमदादिना। इदं लोकोत्तरं कर्मं कृतं लोकहितं महत्।।4।।

sugrīveṇa sahāyena tathā hanūmadādinā/
idaṃ lokottaraṃ karmaṃ kṛtaṃ lokahitaṃ mahat//

Taking the help of Sugrīva and Hanumāna, he (Śrī Rāma) accomplished this stupendous and most magnificent and supernatural deed for the good and welfare of the world (because this Rāvaṇa was tormenting it endlessly, and by slaying him, some semblance of peace was restored in the world) (4).

तथापि हृदि मे नैतदाश्चर्य प्रतिभाति हि। यदि तस्य वधं कुर्याद्रावणस्य दुरात्मनः।।5।।
तदा सम्भाव्यते कीर्तिर्जगत्स्वास्थ्यमवाप्नुयात्। अतो मे हसितं विप्राः क्षमध्वं ज्वलनोपमाः।।6।।

tathāpi hṛdi me naitadāścarya pratibhāti hi/
yadi tasya vadhaṃ kuryādrāvaṇasya durātmanaḥ//

tadā sambhāvyate kīrtirjagatsvāsthyamavāpnuyāt /
ato me hasitaṃ viprāḥ kṣamadhvaṃ jvalanopamāḥ //

Inspite of that, nothing that he (Śrī Rāma) did appears great or surprising or praise worthy in my heart. When he is able to conquer and kill that thousand headed evil and wicked Rāvaṇa (5), it is only then that his true fame and valour would spread and get firmly established in the world. It is then that the world will be really and truthfully freed of its tormenting ailment and horrors inflicted upon it by that fellow (the senior Rāvaṇa).

Oh Brāhmins who are as honourable as the holy fire ! For this reason you shall excuse and forgive me for my temerity for sneering and speaking out of turn and appearing to be showing impertinence and rebuke' (6). [5-6]

आकर्ण्य मुनयः सर्वे साधु साध्विति वादिनः। जानकीं प्रशशंसुस्ते सर्वलोकहितैषिणीम्।।7।।

ākarṇya munayaḥ sarve sādhu sādhviti vādinaḥ /
jānakīṃ praśaśaṃsuste sarvalokahitaiṣiṇīm //

Hearing these words, all the assembled sages and seers hailed Sītā and lauded her for her courage and forthrightedness. They praised Jānakī (Sītā) for her thought for the long term welfare and goodness of the world (7).

राघवो वचनं श्रुत्वा सीताया वीर्यवर्द्धनम्। सिंहनादं विनद्योच्चैः सर्वानाज्ञपयत्प्रभुः।।8।।

rāghavo vacanaṃ śrutvā sītāyā vīryavarddhanam /
siṃhanādaṃ vinadyoccaiḥ sarvānājñapayatprabhuḥ //

Hearing these inspiring and compelling words of Sītā which were encouraging as well as instigating and which stoked the fire of self esteem, dignity, manliness and valour in Śrī Rāma, the latter roared like a lion (or he raised a war cry). The Lord immediately raised his voice and gave the royal command (to prepare for the offensive) (8).

मुनयोऽद्यैव गन्तव्यं रावणस्य जयाय वै। लक्ष्मणं भरतं चैव शत्रुघ्नं चादिशत्प्रभुः।।9।।

munayo'dyaiva gantavyaṃ rāvaṇasya jayāya vai /
lakṣmaṇaṃ bharataṃ caiva śatrughnaṃ cādiśatprabhuḥ //

Śrī Rāma declared, 'Oh sages! I shall immediately go to vanquish that Rāvaṇa today itself'. He gave necessary instructions to Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata and Śatrughna, his brothers (9).

मित्र सुग्रीव हनूमन्सर्वे जाम्बवदादयः। गच्छामः सहितास्तत्र सैनिकैः सह मन्त्रिभिः॥10॥

mitra sugrīva hanūmansarve jāmbavadādayaḥ /
gacchāmaḥ sahitāstatra sainikaiḥ saha mantribhiḥ //

Accompanied by friends Sugrīva (the king of monkeys), Hanumāna (chief minister of Sugrīva who was an ardent devotee of Śrī Rāma), Jāmbavanta (the bear king) etc. along with the army of Ayodhyā, we shall go there fortwith' (10).

इत्याज्ञाप्य महाबाहुः सस्मार पुष्पकं रथम्। स्मरणादागतस्तत्र पुष्पको रथसत्तमः॥11॥

ityājñāpya mahābāhuḥ sasmāra puṣpakaṃ ratham /
smaraṇādāgatastatra puṣpako rathasattamaḥ //

Saying this, the most brave one with strong arms (Śrī Rāma), remembered and invited the divine chariot named Puṣpaka. As soon as it was remembered, the most excellent chariot of the Gods, Puṣpaka, came there (11).

[Note :—The Puṣpaka was actually an air plane and not a chariot par se that moved on the ground upon wheels. It belonged to Kubera, the treasurer of Gods and the elder step brother of the 10-headed Rāvaṇa. It had been forcibly snatched by Rāvaṇa of Laṅkā after he had defeated Kubera, the rightful owner of Puṣpaka, and it was sent back to its rightful owner, Kubera, by Śrī Rāma after he had come back to Ayodhyā from Laṅkā. At that time, Śrī Rāma had requested Puṣpaka to come to him whenever he requisitioned it for his own service. Obviously, a plane is not a human being or any other creature which can listen and talk. Perhaps, 'Puṣpaka' was the name of its chief pilot or commander, or perhaps the plane had some kind of advanced technology that could respond to voice commands. If the latter is the case, then surely it was remote controlled.]

तत्रारुहन्महावीरारामचन्द्रपुरोगमाः। भरतो लक्ष्मणश्चैव शत्रुघ्नश्चामितद्युतिः॥12॥

tatrāruhanmahāvīrārāmacandrapurogamāḥ /
bharato lakṣmaṇaścaiva śatrughnaścāmitadyutiḥ //

Śrī Rāma boarded it first followed by all the warriors and his brothers Bharata, Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna who were radiant like a fount of so many sources of electric (12).

सुग्रीवा प्रमुखाः सर्वे वानराजितकाशिनः। विभीषणो महाबाहुः सह रक्षोगणैः प्रभुः॥13॥

sugrīvā pramukhāḥ sarve vānarājitakāśinaḥ /
vibhīṣaṇo mahābāhuḥ saha rakṣogaṇaiḥ prabhuḥ //

Alongside all the chief monkeys who had the potentials of obtaining victory over the enemy, Sugrīva also boarded the plane. King Vibhīṣaṇa, who was strong in arms, also got aboard accompanied by his demons (13).

मात्रापित्रप्यकथनादजानन्बोधितोऽनया। सीतया रामकार्यार्थं निर्ययौ राघवाज्ञया।।14।।

mātrāpitrapyakathanādajānanbodhito'nayā /
sītayā rāmakāryārthaṃ niryayau rāghavājñayā //

They did not take permission from or inform their parents. Inspired and spurred by Sītā and ordered by Śrī Rāma, they commenced on the mission to accomplish the work of the Lord (14).

[Note :—This verse shows that when one steps forward to do the work of the Lord, there is no need to either inform or take permission from one's elders, such as one's parents and Guru. Further, no invocation of other Gods is also necessary if one goes on the Lord's mission. These courtesies, formalities and traditions need not be adhered to when the Lord's work is at stake.]

सुमन्त्राद्या मन्त्रिगणश्च ऋषयस्ते च निर्ययुः। नानाशस्त्रप्रहरणास्तत्रायुधकलापिनः।।15।।
मुमुचुस्ते सिंहनादं महाघोरं महाबलाः।। 15½।।

sumantrādyā mantrigaṇaśca ṛṣayaste ca niryayuḥ /
nānāśastrapraharaṇāstatrāyudhakalāpinaḥ //
mumucuste siṃhanādaṃ mahāghoraṃ mahābalāḥ /

Ministers such as Sumantra and all those sages who had assembled there also accompanied the party. Those most brave, strong, potent, powerful and valiant warriors, who were well armed with different varieties of arms and armaments, raised a tumultuous war cry (15-15½).

धनुःशब्देन रामस्य सिंहनादेन चैव हि।।16।।
चचाल वसुधा शैलाश्चेलुः पेतुर्ग्रहाश्च खात्। नद्योऽशुष्यन्समुद्वेलाः सागराश्च चकम्पिरे।।17।।

dhanuḥśabdena rāmasya siṃhanādena caiva hi //
cacāla vasudhā śailāśceluḥ peturgrahāśca khāt /
nadyo'śuṣyansamudvelāḥ sāgarāśca cakampire //

By the resonating twang made by the bow of Śrī Rāma and his thunderous roar, the earth and the mountains shook and trembled, the celestial bodies such as the different planets cracked, and splinters and shrapnel from them began falling down upon the earth (i.e. there was a shower of meteors from the sky), the rivers started drying up (probably because either they changed their courses or were sucked in by the cracking of the river bed by the shaking and crunching of the earth), and the ocean abandoned its limits (i.e. the waters of the ocean heaved and rose to submerge large tracts of lands as during a high tide; there were huge ocean waves, some island disappeared underneath and new ones emerged. This scenario resembles the Tsunami that had lashed some parts of south-east Asia recently in 2007) (16-17).

सुग्रीवो हनुमान्नीलो जाम्बवान्नल एव च। ग्रसन्त इव ते सर्वे निर्ययू रामशासनात्।।18।।

sugrīvo hanumānnīlo jāmbavānnala eva ca/
grasanta iva te sarve niryayū rāmaśāsanāt//

Sugrīva (the monkey king), Hanumāna (his chief minister and greatest devotee of Śrī Rāma), Neel (the chief architect who had constructed the bridge over the ocean during Śrī Rāma's campaign to Laṅkā to conquer the city and rescue Sītā from the clutches of the 10-headed Rāvaṇa), Jāmbavanta (the bear king)—all of them moved ahead on the orders of Śrī Rāma. Their demeanours and attitude made it appear as if the sky was being devoured by them; the sky was being completely obscured by them or eclipsed by them. [That is, the army moved in such great numbers and with such great speed, defiance and vigour that it appeared to cover the sky from end to end as if almost devouring it or eclipsing it. The sky appeared to be covered by a dense bank of thick cloud of dust raised by the army, completely obscuring it from view.] (18)

स तया सीतया सार्द्धं रामचन्द्रो महाबलः। कामगं पुष्पकं दिव्यमारुरोह धनुर्धरः।।19।।

sa tayā sītayā sārddhaṃ rāmacandro mahābalaḥ/
kāmagaṃ puṣpakaṃ divyamāruroha dhanurdharaḥ//

Then Śrī Rāma holding the bow sat on the divine and magnificent Puṣpaka plane along with Sītā. This plane could be steered at will (19).

पुष्पकं ते समारुह्या सर्वं एव महाबलाः। सीतया भ्रातृभिः सार्द्धं रामचन्द्र महाबलाः।।20।।

puṣpakaṃ te samāruhyā sarvaṃ eva mahābalāḥ/
sītayā bhrātṛbhiḥ sārddhaṃ rāmacandra mahābalāḥ//

All those great braves boarded the Puṣpaka. Along with Sītā and his brothers, the most brave and strong Śrī Rāma also boarded it (20).

[Note :—Surely and obviously, the Puṣpaka was no ordinary royal plane meant for great Gods or kings. It must have been a gigantic military transport plane that was big enough to accommodate the entire army along with its arms and armaments.]

प्रोत्साहयन्तो वचनैर्निययुर्जितकाशिनः। रामाज्ञया पुष्पकं तदाकाशपथमाश्रितम्॥21॥

protsāhayanto vacanairniyayurjitakāśinaḥ /
rāmājñayā puṣpakaṃ tadākāśapathamāśritam //

All of them had the requisite potential and were honoured and recognised as 'great conquerors of enemies'. Śrī Rāma encouraged all of them with his bold and encouraging words. At his instructions, Puṣpaka lifted itself from the ground and became skybound (21).

मनोमारुतवेगेन क्षणेन गरुडो यथा। जगमा पुष्करद्वीपं यत्रास्ते मानसोत्तरः॥22॥

manomārutavegena kṣaṇena garuḍo yathā /
jagamā puṣkaradvīpaṃ yatrāste mānasottaraḥ //

It moved with the speed and swiftness of mind, wind and the legendary Garuḍa (the eagle or heron bird who is the mount of Lord Viṣṇu and is considered the fastest and swiftest bird in existence). In a short time it arrived at the Puṣkara island or a small continent lying to the north of the Mānasa lake (22).

मानसोत्तरमासाद्य विस्मितास्ते महाबलाः। किं चित्रं किं चित्रमिति प्रोचुराश्चर्यलक्षणाः॥23॥

mānasottaramāsādya vismitāste mahābalāḥ /
kiṃ citraṃ kiṃ citramiti procurāścaryalakṣaṇāḥ //

When those brave, strong and valiant warriors reached the northern side of Mānasa lake, they were awed and amazed at what they saw. They exclaimed repeatedly in wonderment, 'What a wonderful and fascinating sight; how amazing, how strange and how mystifying a sight that we behold. What an astonishing view that we see in front of us !' (23).

राघवो भ्रातृभिः सार्द्धं सह वानरपुङ्गवैः। सिंहनादं ननादोच्चैधर्नुनुश्चापि व्यकर्षयत्॥24॥

rāghavo bhrātṛbhiḥ sārddhaṃ saha vānarapuṅgavaiḥ /
siṃhanādaṃ nanādoccaidharnunuścāpi vyakarṣayat //

Rāghava (Śrī Rāma) roared like a lion accompanied by his brothers and the monkeys. [That is, all of them gave out a loud and shrill war cry.] Then he pulled the strings of his bow (24).

स शब्दस्तुमुलो भूत्वा पृथिवीं चान्तरीक्षकम्। पातालविवरांश्चैव पूरयामास सर्वतः।।25।।
sa śabdastumulo bhūtvā pṛthivīṃ cāntarīkṣakam /
pātālavivarāṃścaiva pūrayāmāsa sarvataḥ //

The thunderous and loud uproar of battle cry spread throughout not only the sky and every nook, corner, cave, burrow and crevice of the earth but also penetrated the fissures and cracks in the earth to reach the subterranean and nether worlds. [That is, the whole world resonated with the clamour of the war cry raised by Śrī Rāma and his army.] (25)

रावणः सहसोत्तस्थौ किमेतदिति सम्वदन्। तत्राथ राक्षसाः क्रुद्धाः सर्व एव विनियुर्युः।।26।।
अहो कुतः स्विच्छब्दोऽयं साधु सर्वेनिरुप्यताम्।। 26½।।
rāvaṇaḥ sahasottasthau kimetaditi samvadan /
tatrātha rākṣasāḥ kruddhāḥ sarva eva viniyuryuḥ //
aho kutaḥ svicchabdo'yaṃ sādhu sarvenirupyatām //

The 1000-headed Rāvaṇa was completely taken aback and exclaimed with a start, surprised and astonished at this sudden unexpected development, 'What is this!' He became alert and set up bolt upright. All the demons hurriedly came out angrily together to investigate the matter and the cause of the upheaval, saying 'lets find out from where this noise is coming and what is the cause of this unprecedented tumult and nuisance?' (26-26½)

इत्याभाष्य राक्षसेन्द्रो राक्षसेन्द्रैर्महाबलैः।। 27।।
नगरान्निर्ययौ शीघ्रं संदष्टोष्ठपुटो बली। द्वादशादित्यसङ्काशः सहस्त्रवदनो महान्।।28।।
ityābhāṣya rākṣasendro rākṣasendrairmahābalaiḥ //
nagarānniryayau śīghraṃ saṃdaṣṭoṣṭhapuṭo balī /
dvādaśādityasāśaḥ sahasravadano mahān //

This way, that strong and brave king of demons came out of the city very swiftly, chewing and biting his lips in anger, vehemence, annoyance and disgust. He was accompanied by other great demon chieftains who were as strong, valiant and brave as him. His one thousand faces (heads) glowed like all the 12 Ādityas (legendary mythological sons) shining simultenously (27-28).

[Note :—According to Purāṇas, the Ādityas are 12 mythological suns and they shine simultaneously at the time of dooms day. By referring to them, Vālmīki wishes to emphasis the point that Rāvaṇa glowed so furiously in anger and annoyance that he appeared to resemble the scenario appearing at the time of dooms day when all the mythological suns shine together.]

द्विसहस्त्रभुजोद्रिक्तो द्विसहस्त्रविलोचनः। महामेघसमाध्वाने वडवाग्निसमः क्रुधा।।29।।
dvisahasrabhujodrikto dvisahasravilocanaḥ /
mahāmeghasamādhvāne vaḍavāgnisamaḥ krudhā //

He had two thousand arms and two thousand eyes. He resembled the huge dark fearsome cloud appearing during doomsday. His anger was so furious that it resembled the ferocious fire called 'Vaḍavāgni' (the legendary underground fire that dries up the ocean and results in the creation of large tracts of desert) (29).

शतयोजनविस्तीर्णे रथे सूर्यसमत्विषि। नानयुधानि संगृह्य परिघप्रासतोमरान्।। 30।।
śatayojanavistīrṇe rathe sūryasamatviṣi /
nānayudhāni saṃgṛhya parighaprāsatomarān //

He strode on a war chariot which was so huge that it covered an area of 1000 Yojanas (or roughly 800 miles) and it glowed with the radiance of the sun. He collected different types of arms and armaments in it. Some of them are the following—Parigha and Prāsa (ancient spear, spike or lancet) as well as Tomara (a weapon having a long wooden rod having a hammer-like head for bashing the head of the enemy; a manual battering ram) (30).

भुसुण्डि परशून्घण्टां लौहमुद्गर चक्रकम्। पाशांश्च विविधान्गृह्य बाणान्कर्मारमार्जितान्।।31।।
bhusuṇḍi paraśūnghaṇṭāṃ lauhamudgara cakrakam /
pāśāṃśca vividhāngṛhya bāṇānkarmāramārjitān //

He arrived himself with other weapons such as Bhuṣuṇḍī (an ancient weapon designed like a pick axe), Paraśu (a battle axe), Ghaṇṭā (a weight attached to a chain), iron Mudgara (a dumbbell type of weapon), Cakra (a war disc with razor sharp serrated edge), Pāśa (iron clamps or grips or vices or snares) and arrows (31).

विपाठान्क्षुरधारांश्च अर्धचन्द्राकृतीनपि। नानायुधसहस्त्राणि नानाविधनूंषि च।।32।।
vipāṭhānkṣuradhārāṃśca ardhacandrākṛtīnapi /
nānāyudhasahasrāṇi nānāvidhanūṃṣi ca //

He had thousands of weapons, arms and armaments with him. They were all very uncompromising and as sharp and effective as a knife. Some of the sharp edged weapons that he carried were shaped like a crescent moon (e.g. a sickle). He had bows of numerous varieties (32).

प्रगृह्य सहसा प्रयाद्यत्र रामो धनुधरः। लोचनैः क्रोधसन्दीप्तैरुल्काभिरिव दीपितः।।33।।
pragṛhya sahasā prayādyatra rāmo dhanudharaḥ /
locanaiḥ krodhasandīptairulkābhiriva dīpitaḥ //

He (the 1000-headed Rāvaṇa) immediately came to the place where Śrī Rāma, who was holding a bow at the ready, was present to confront him. His angry eyes lit up like a burning meteor (33).

कोयमित्यब्रवीत्क्रोधानलं प्रोद्वमन्निव। सिंहनादं मम पुरे रिपुत्वाद्विससर्ज ह।।34।।
koyamityabravītkrodhānalaṃ prodvamanniva /
siṃhanādaṃ mama pure riputvādvisasarja ha //

Spitting fire and brimstone with furious anger, he thundered, 'Who is this enemy who dares to roar so loudly like a lion in my city? (34).

ममापि रिपुरस्तीति दुर्यशः समुपस्थितम्। इन्द्राद्याः ककुभां नाथा भृत्या प्राणपरीप्सया।।35।।
mamāpi ripurastīti duryaśaḥ samupasthitam /
indrādyāḥ kakubhāṃ nāthā bhṛtyā prāṇaparīpsayā //

That there is someone who is opposed to me is a cause of great shame and concern for me. Even Indra and other Gods are subservient to me; they are like my slaves and servants (35).

पातालविवरे स्वर्ग स्वर्गे पातालमेककम्। करोमि सहसैवाहं मानवानां तथैकताम्।।36।।
pātālavivare svarga svarge pātālamekakam /
karomi sahasaivāhaṃ mānavānāṃ tathaikatām //

I can put the heavens inside a hole, a trench or a cave in the netherworld and thrust the latter in the former. I can easily herd all the humans and stuff them in there (36).

मेरुप्रभृतिशैलांश्च चूर्णचाम्यणुसंख्यया। देवलोकं नृणां कुर्यान्नृलोकं त्रिविवौकसाम्।।37।।
meruprabhṛtiśailāṃśca cūrṇacāmyaṇusaṃkhyayā /
devalokaṃ nṛṇāṃ kuryānṛlokaṃ trivivaukasām //

I can crush to dust huge mountains the likes of mount Meru; I can convert or transform the abode of Gods into the world of human beings and vice versa (37).

उद्धृत्य पृथिवीं छिद्यामन्नतं नखराग्रकैः। ब्रह्मा मां वारयामास सांत्वयन्प्रियभाषितैः।।38।।

uddhṛtya pṛthivīṃ chidyāmannataṃ nakharāgrakaiḥ /
brahmā māṃ vārayāmāsa sāṃtvayanpriyabhāṣitaiḥ //

I can scoop up both the earth and the Śeṣanātha (the legendary hooded serpent who holds the earth aloft on its hoods) with the tip of my nails and gouge them out from the cosmos. In fact, I had already been doing it when Brahmā had come and stopped me (38).

अन्यथा राक्षसमृते नारक्षं जगतीतले। सूर्यचन्द्रमसौ भूत्वा तिथिप्रणयनं त्वहम्।।39।।

anyathā rākṣasamṛte nārakṣaṃ jagatītale /
sūryacandramasau bhūtvā tithipraṇayanaṃ tvaham //

Had it not been so, I would not have allowed anybody to live on this earth except the demons. I would have assumed the role of the Sun and Moon and regulated the occurrence of the various dates of the solar and lunar calendars (39).

बलाहकत्वमिन्द्रत्वं पृथ्वीसेवादिकाः क्रियाः। कुर्या यमत्वं वहित्वं वरुणत्वं धनेशताम्।।40।।

balāhakatvamindratvaṃ pṛthvīsevādikāḥ kriyāḥ /
kuryā yamatvaṃ vahitvaṃ varuṇatvaṃ dhaneśatām //

I can single handedly assume the role of and carry on the functions of the clouds, such as irrigation of the earth (with the help of timely rains), of Indra (the God who regulates the clouds and rainfall), Yama (the God of death and the one who decides the fate of a dead person), the Fire-God, the Water-God as well as Kubera (who is the treasurer of the heavens)' (40).

इत्येहं बहुधा गर्जन्नाजगामान्तिकं हरेः। सेनाध्यक्षा राक्षसेन्द्रा राज्ञा सार्द्धं समागताः।।41।।

ityehaṃ bahudhā garjannājagāmāntikaṃ hareḥ /
senādhyakṣā rākṣasendrā rājñā sārddhaṃ samāgatāḥ //

In this way, roaring and thundering viciously and formidably in a variety of ways, that king of demons, accompanied by his chief commanders and generals of the army, came to the place (in the battlefield) where Śrī Hari (Śrī Rāma) was standing to meet him (41).

नानाप्रहरणोपेता नानारथपदातिनः। एकैकस्यापि पर्याप्ता जगती नेति मन्महे।।42।।

nānāpraharaṇopetā nānārathapadātinaḥ /
ekaikasyāpi paryāptā jagatī neti manmahe //

All of them were armed with a wide range of different categories of weapons, both offensive as well as defensive, and were accompanied by myriad throngs and huge columns of soldiers and warriors riding on chariots as well as marching on foot. Each one of them was so powerful, brave, valiant and strong that none in this world could every hope to stand before them or face them in battle (42).

केषांचिदपि नामानि भारद्वाज निबोध मे। कोटिशो मनसः पूर्णः शलः पालो हलीमुखः।।43।।
keṣāṃcidapi nāmāni bhāradvāja nibodha me/
koṭiśo manasaḥ pūrṇaḥ śalaḥ pālo halīmukhaḥ//

[Sage Vālmīki said to sage Bhāradvāja who was listening to the narration of this Rāmāyaṇa with rapt attention—] 'Oh Bhāradvāja! I shall now list the names of some of those prominent chief generals of the demon army; listen carefully. They are—Koṭiśa, Mānasa, Pūrṇa, Śala, Pāla, Halimukha (43).

पिच्छलः कौणपञ्चक्र कालवेगः प्रकालकः। हिरण्यबाहुः शरणः कक्षकः कालदन्तकः।।44।।
picchalaḥ kauṇapañcakra kālavegaḥ prakālakaḥ/
hiraṇyabāhuḥ śaraṇaḥ kakṣakaḥ kāladantakaḥ//

Picchala, Kauṇapa, Cakra, Kālavega, Prakālaka, Hiraṇyabāhu, Śaraṇa, Kakṣaka, Kāladantaka (44).

पुच्छाण्डको मण्डलकः पिण्डसेक्ता रभेणकः। उच्छिखः करभो भद्रो विश्वजेता विरोहणः।।45।।
pucchāṇḍako maṇḍalakaḥ piṇḍasektā rabheṇakaḥ/
ucchikhaḥ karabho bhadro viśvajetā virohaṇaḥ//

Pucchāṇḍaka, Maṇḍalaka, Piṇḍasektā, Rabheṇaka, Ucchikha, Karbha, Bhadra, Viśvajetā, Virohaṇa (45).

शिली शलकरो मूकः सुकुमारः प्ररेषणः। मुद्गरः शशरोमा च सुरोमा च महाहनुः।।46।।
śilī śalakaro mūkaḥ sukumāraḥ prareṣaṇaḥ/
mudgaraḥ śaśaromā ca suromā ca mahāhanuḥ//

Śilī, Śalakara, Mūka, Sukumāra, Prareṣaṇa, Mudgara, Śaśaromā, Suromā, Mahāhanu (46).

पारावतः पारियात्रः पाण्डुरो रोहिणः कृशः। विहङ्ग शरभो मोदः प्रमोदः सहतापनः।।47।।
pārāvataḥ pāriyātraḥ pāṇḍuro rohiṇaḥ kṛśaḥ/
vihaṅga śarabho modaḥ pramodaḥ sahatāpanaḥ//

Pārāvata, Pāriyātra, Pāṇḍura, Rohiṇa, Kṛśa, Vihaṅga, Śarbha, Moda, Pramoda, Sahatāpana (47).

कृकरः कुण्डलो वेणी वेणीस्कन्धः कुमारकः। बाहुकः शंखवेगश्च धूर्तकः पातपातकौ।।48।।
kṛkaraḥ kuṇḍalo veṇī veṇīskandhaḥ kumārakaḥ /
bāhukaḥ śaṃkhavegaśca dhūrtakaḥ pātapātakau //

Kṛkara, Kuṇḍala, Veṇī, Veṇīskandha, Kumāraka, Bāhuka, Śaṅkhavega, Dhūrtaka, Pāta, Pātaka (48).

शंकुकर्णः पिटरकः कुटीरमुखसेचकौ। पूर्णांगदः पूर्णमुखः प्रभाषः शकुलिर्हरिः।।49।।
śaṃkukarṇaḥ piṭarakaḥ kuṭīramukhasecakau /
pūrṇāṃgadaḥ pūrṇamukhaḥ prabhāṣaḥ śakulirhariḥ //

Śaṅkukarṇa, Piṭaraka, Kuṭīrmukha, Secaka, Pūrṇāṅgada, Pūṇamukha, Prabhāṣa, Śakuli, Hari (49).

अमाहिठः कामठकः सुषेणो मानसी व्ययः। भैरवी मुण्डदेवाङ्ग पिशङ्गश्चोडपालकः।।50।।
amāhiṭhaḥ kāmaṭhakaḥ suṣeṇo mānasī vyayaḥ /
bhairavī muṇḍadevāṅga piśaṅgaścoḍapālakaḥ //

Amāhiṭha, Kāmaṭhaka, Suṣeṇa, Mānasa, Vyaya, Bhairava, Muṇḍa, Devaṅga, Piśaṅga, Uḍapālaka (50).

ऋषभो वेगवान्नाम पिण्डारकमहाहनू। रक्ताङ्ग सर्वसारङ्गः समृद्धः पाटवासकौः।।51।।
ṛṣabho vegavānnāma piṇḍārakamahāhanū /
raktāṅga sarvasāraṅgaḥ samṛddhaḥ pāṭavāsakauḥ //

Ṛṣabha, Vegavān, Piṇḍāraka, Mahāhanu, Raktāṅga, Sarvasāraṅga, Samṛdha, Pāṭavāsaka (51).

वराहको रावणकः सुचित्रश्चित्रवेगिकः। पराशरस्तरुणिको मणिस्कन्धस्तथारुणिः।।52।।
varāhako rāvaṇakaḥ sucitraścitravegikaḥ /
parāśarastaruṇiko maṇiskandhastathāruṇiḥ //

Varāhaka, Rāvaṇaka, Sucitra, Citravegika, Parāśara, Taruṇika, Maṇiskandha and Āruṇi (52).

[Note :—The total number of generals of the demon army listed herein above are 88.]

सेनाध्यक्षा महाब्रह्मन्कीर्तिताः कीर्तिवर्धनाः। प्राधान्येन बहुत्वात्तु न सर्वे परिकीर्तितः।।53।।
senādhyakṣā mahābrahmankīrtitāḥ kīrtivardhanāḥ /
prādhānyena bahutvāttu na sarve parikīrtitaḥ //

Oh Brāhmin (i.e. Bhāradvāja)! These are the ones who have great fame. There are others also, but I have not listed them because the list would become too long (53).

न शक्याः परिसंख्यातुं ये युद्धाय समागतः। नीलरक्ता सिता घोरा महाकाया महाबलाः ।।54।।
सप्तशीर्षाद्विशीर्षाश्च पञ्चशीर्षास्तथापरे। कालानल महाघोरा हुताशसमविग्रहाः ।।55।।

na śakyāḥ parisaṃkhyātuṃ ye yuddhāya samāgataḥ /
nīlaraktā sitā ghorā mahākāyā mahābalāḥ //
saptaśīrṣādviśīrṣāśca pañcaśīrṣāstathāpare /
kālānala mahāghorā hutāśasamavigrahāḥ //

It is impossible to put a number or a count to those who had come to fight Śrī Rāma. They were of all shapes and had different forms—some had the countenance as if their blood was blue (i.e. had poison flowing through their veins), others were whitish in complexion. They were all very terrible, fearsome, formidable and horrible to look at, had huge and colossus bodies, and were most strong, brave, valiant and courageous (54). Some had seven and some others had two heads, while still others had five heads on their bodies. They were most ferocious like the fire of the doomsday; they had bodies resembling a fiercely raging fire (55). [54-55]

महाकाया महावेगाः शैलशृङ्गसमुच्छ्रयाः। योजनायामविस्तीर्णाद्वियोजनसमुच्छ्रयाः ।।56।।

mahākāyā mahāvegāḥ śailaśṛṅgasamucchrayāḥ /
yojanāyāmavistīrṇādviyojanasamucchrayāḥ //

They had great, colossus and huge bodies. They were very swift, agile and active in the battlefield. They were tall and robust like the summit of huge mountains. Their chests measured two Yojanas across (i.e. their chest measured 8 x 2 = 16 miles across), and their height was about one Yojana (8 miles) (56).

कामरूपाः कामबला दीप्तानलसमत्विषः। अन्ये च बहवः शूराः शूलपट्टिशधारिणः ।।57।।

kāmarūpāḥ kāmabalā dīptānalasamatviṣaḥ /
anye ca bahavaḥ śūrāḥ śūlapaṭṭiśadhāriṇaḥ //

They could assume any form they wished and acquired any amount of strength as they needed. Their radiance resembled the fierce heat of a burning fire. They were brave, valiant, courageous and strong. They were well armed to the teeth by numerous pointed weapons called Śūla (literally, weapons which were needle sharp; here referring to spears, spikes, lancets etc.) and carried corresponding shields for protection (57).

दिव्य प्रहरणोपेता नानावेषविभूषिताः। शृणु नामानि चान्येषां येऽन्ये रावणसैनिकाः।।58।।
divya praharaṇopetā nānāveṣavibhūṣitāḥ /
śṛṇu nāmāni cānyeṣāṃ ye'nye rāvaṇasainikāḥ //

They were well armed with different varieties of magnificent and fascinating weapons, arms and armaments, offensive as well as defensive. They had myriad countenance, faces and attires, and they wore as many number of decorations and honours (that they had acquired due to their accomplishments and exploits during earlier wars).

Now listen to some of the names of the commanders of Rāvaṇa's army (these were not the generals; they were commanders of the different units or wings of the huge demon army) (58).

शंकुकर्णोनिकुम्भश्च पद्मः कुमुद एव च। अनन्तो द्वादशभुजस्तथा कृष्णोपकृष्णकौ।।59।।
śaṃkukarṇonikumbhaśca padmaḥ kumuda eva ca /
ananto dvādaśabhujastathā kṛṣṇopakṛṣṇakau //

Śaṅkukarṇa, Nikumbha, Padma, Kumuda, Ananta, Dvādaśabhuja, Kṛṣṇa, Upkṛṣṇa (59).

घ्राणश्रवाः कपिस्कन्धः काञ्चनाक्षो जलन्धमः। अक्षसन्तर्दनो ब्रह्मन्कुनदीकस्तमोऽभ्रकृत।।60।।
ghrāṇaśravāḥ kapiskandhaḥ kāñcanākṣo jalandhamaḥ /
akṣasantardano brahmankunadīkastamo'bhrakṛta //

Ghrāṇaśravā, Kapiskandha, Kañcanākṣa, Jalandhama, Akṣasantardana, Brahmankunadīka, Tamobhrakṛta (60).

एकाक्षो द्वादशाक्षश्च तथैवैकजटाभिधः। सहस्त्रबाहुर्विकटो व्याघ्राख्य क्षितिकम्पनः।।61।।
ekākṣo dvādaśākṣaśca tathaivaikajaṭābhidhaḥ /
sahasrabāhurvikaṭo vyāghrākhya kṣitikampanaḥ //

Ekākṣa, Dvādaśākṣa, Ekajaṭā, Sahasrabāhu, Vikaṭa, Vyāghra, Kṣitikampana (61).

पुण्यनामानुनामा च सुवक्त्रः प्रियदर्शनः। परिश्रितः कोकनदः प्रियमाल्यानुलेपनः।।62।।
puṇyanāmānunāmā ca suvaktraḥ priyadarśanaḥ /
pariśritaḥ kokanadaḥ priyamālyānulepanaḥ //

Puṇyanāma, Anunāmā, Suvaktra, Priyadarśana, Pariśrita, Kokanada, Priyamālyānulepana (62).

अजोदरो गजशिराः सकन्धाक्षः शतलोचनः। ज्वालाजिह्वः करालश्च सितकेशो जटी हरिः॥63॥

ajodaro gajaśirāḥ sakandhākṣaḥ śatalocanaḥ /
jvālājihvaḥ karālaśca sitakeśo jaṭī hariḥ //

Ajodara, Gajaśirā, Skandhākṣa, Śatalocana, Jvālājivha, Karāla, Sitakeśa, Jaṭi, Hari (63).

चतुर्दंष्ट्रोष्ठजिह्वश्च मेघनादः पृथुश्रवाः। विकृताक्षो धनुर्वक्त्रो जाठरो मारुताशनः॥64॥

caturdaṣṭroṣṭhajihvaśca meghanādaḥ pṛthuśravāḥ /
vikṛtākṣo dhanurvaktro jāṭharo mārutāśanaḥ //

Caturdraṣṭra, Oṣṭhajihva, Meghanāda, Pṛthuśravā, Vikṛtākṣa, Dhanurvaktra, Jāṭhara, Mārutāśana (64).

उदाराक्षो रथाक्षश्च वज्रानाभो वसुप्रभः। समुद्रवेगो विप्रेन्द्रः शैलकम्पी तथैव च॥65॥

udārākṣo rathākṣaśca vajranābho vasuprabhaḥ /
samudravego viprendraḥ śailakampī tathaiva ca //

Udārākṣa, Rathākṣa, Vajranābha, Vasuprabha, Samudravega, Viprendra, Śailakampī (65).

वृषमेषप्रवाहश्च तथा नान्दोपनन्दकौ। धूम्रश्वेतः कलिङ्गश्च सिद्धार्थे वरदस्था॥66॥

vṛṣameṣapravāhaśca tathā nāndopanandakau /
dhūmraśvetaḥ kaliṅgaśca siddhārthe varadasthā //

Vṛṣa-Meṣa-Pravāha, Nanda, Upnanda, Dhūmraśveta, Kaliṅga, Siddhārtha, Varada (66).

प्रियकश्चैकनन्दश्च गोनन्दश्च प्रतापवान्। आनन्दश्च प्रयोदश्च स्वस्तिको ध्रुवकस्तथा॥67॥

priyakaścaikanandaśca gonandaśca pratāpavān /
ānandaśca pramodaśca svastiko dhruvakastathā //

Priyaka, Ekananda, Gonanda, Pratāpavāna, Ānanda, Pramoda, Svāstika, Dhruvaka (67).

क्षेमबाहुः सुबाहुश्च सिद्धपात्र सुव्रतः। गोव्रजः कनकापीडो महापारिषदेश्वरः॥68॥

kṣemabāhuḥ subāhuśca siddhapātra suvrataḥ /
govrajaḥ kanakāpīḍo mahāpāriṣadeśvaraḥ //

Kṣemabāhu, Subāhu, Siddhapātra, Suvrata, Govraja, Kanakāpīḍa, Mahāpariṣadeśvara (68).

गायनो दमनश्चैवः बाणः खड्गश्च वीर्यवान्। वैताली गतिताली च तथा कथकवातिकौ॥69॥

gāyano damanaścaivaḥ bāṇaḥ khaḍgaśca vīryavān /
vaitālī gatitālī ca tathā kathakavātikau //

Gāyana, Damana, Bāṇa, Khaḍga, Vīryavāna, Vaitālī, Gatitālī, Kathaka, Vātika (69).

हंसजः पङ्कदिग्धाङ्गः समुद्रोन्मादनश्च ह। रणोत्कटः प्रहासश्च वेतसिद्धश्च नन्दकः ।।70।।

haṃsajaḥ paṅkadigdhāṅgaḥ samudronmādanaśca ha /
raṇotkaṭaḥ prahāsaśca vetasiddhaśca nandakaḥ //

Haṃsaja, Paṅkādi, Dhāṅga, Samudra, Unmādana, Raṇotkaṭa, Prahāsa, Vetasiddha and Nandaka (70).

[Note :—The total number of commanders of the different units of the demon army comes to 93.]

एते पुरा रावणसैन्यपाला नानायुधप्राहरणा रणेषु।
हंसेषु मेषेषु वृषेषु वीरा रामं प्रतस्तुः कृतसिंहनादाः ।।71।।

ete purā rāvaṇasainyapālā nānāyudhaprāharaṇā raṇeṣu /
haṃseṣu meṣeṣu vṛṣeṣu vīrā rāmaṃ pratastuḥ kṛtasiṃhanādāḥ //

All these great brave generals and commanders of Rāvaṇa's army armed themselves to the teeth with a wide range and different varieties of offensive and defensive weapons. They rode on swans, he goats or rams as well as on buffaloes and bulls, roared and thundered like angry lions, and came out of the city to the battlefield to face Śrī Rāma (71).

Thus ends Canto 18 of the ancient epic called Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa written by sage Vālmīki describing Śrī Rāma's arrival with his army to challenge the 1000-headed Rāvaṇa at Puṣkara and the departure of the latter's army to meet the challenge.

* * *

Canto 19

The description of the sons of the 1000-headed Rāvaṇa and his army

(contd. from canto 18)

This canto is an extension of the previous canto no. 18. It not only lists the name of 54 sons of Rāvaṇa but also describes his many million strong army of demons in great detail. The army looked most horrendous, terrifying, grotesque and abominable. It consisted of all forms of fearful creatures except humans, and included ghosts and phantoms, birds of prey and other birds of varying denominations, as well as poisonous snakes and other reptiles, monkey faced animals, besides lions, jackals, elephants, horses, donkeys, bulls and buffaloes.

रावणस्यौरसाः पुत्रास्सह राक्षसपुङ्गवैः। नानाप्रहरणोपेता दुद्रुचु राघवं रणे।।1।।

rāvaṇasyaurasāḥ putrāssaha rākṣasapuṅgavaiḥ /
nānāpraharaṇopetā dudrucu rāghavaṃ raṇe //

The sons of Rāvaṇa were accompanied by other great senior demons who were all excellent amongst their race. They were all well armed to the teeth with different varieties of arms and armaments, and they together made an assault on Rāghava (Śrī Rāma) in the battlefield (1).

नामान्येषां प्रवक्ष्यामि भरद्वाज शृणुष्व मे। कालकण्ठ प्रभाषश्च तथा कुम्भाण्डको परः।।2।।

nāmānyeṣāṃ pravakṣyāmi bharadvāja śṛṇuṣva me /
kālakaṇṭha prabhāṣaśca tathā kumbhāṇḍako paraḥ //

Oh Bhāradvāja! I shall tell you the names of all his (Rāvaṇa's) sons. Listen carefully—Kālakaṇṭha, Prabhāṣa, Kumbhāṇḍaka (2).

कालकक्ष शितश्चैव भूतलोन्मथनस्तथा। यज्ञबाहु प्रबाहुश्च देवयाजी च सोमपः।।3।।

kālakakṣa śitaścaiva bhūtalonmathanastathā /
yajñabāhu prabāhuśca devayājī ca somapaḥ //

Kālakakṣa, Śita, Bhūtala, Unmathana, Yajñabāhu, Prabāhu, Devayājī, Somapa (3).

मज्जालश्च महातेजाः क्रथः क्राथोवसुव्रतः। तुहरश्च तुहारश्च चित्रदेवश्च वीर्यवान्।।4।।

majjālaśca mahātejāḥ krathaḥ krāthovasuvrataḥ /
tuharaśca tuhāraśca citradevaśca vīryavān //

Majjāla, Mahāteja, Kratha, Krātha, Vasuvrata, Tuhara, Tuhāra, Citradeva, Vīryavān (4).

मधुरः सुप्रासादाश्च किरीटश्च महाबलः। वसनो मधुवर्णश्च कलशोदर एव च।।5।।

madhuraḥ suprāsādāśca kirīṭaśca mahābalaḥ /
vasano madhuvarṇaśca kalaśodara eva ca //

Madhura, Suprasāda, Kirīṭa, Mahābalī, Vasana, Madhuvarṇa, Kalaśodara (5).

धर्मदो मन्मथकरः सूचीवक्त्रश्च वीर्यवान्। श्वेतवक्त्रश्च सुवक्त्रश्च चारुवक्त्रश्च पाण्डुरः।।6।।

dharmado manmathakaraḥ sūcīvaktraśca vīryavān /
śvetavaktraśca suvaktraśca cāruvaktraśca pāṇḍuraḥ //

Dharmada, Manmathakara, Sūcivaktra, Vīryavāna, Śvetavaktra, Suvaktra, Cāruvaktra, Pāṇḍuraḥ (6).

दण्डबाहुः सुबाहुश्च रजः कोकिलकस्तथा। अचलः कालकाक्षश्च बालेशो बालभक्षकः।।7।।

daṇḍabāhuḥ subāhuśca rajaḥ kokilakastathā /
acalaḥ kālakākṣaśca bāleśo bālabhakṣakaḥ //

Daṇḍabāhu, Subāhu, Raja, Kokilaka, Acala, Kālakākṣa, Bāleśa, Bālabhakṣaka (7).

समश्चानकः कोकनदो गृध्रपत्रश्च जम्बुकः। लोहाजवक्त्रो जवन कुम्भवक्त्रश्च कुम्भकः।।8।।

samaścānakaḥ kokanado gṛdhrapatraśca jambukaḥ /
lohājavaktro javana kumbhavaktraśca kumbhakaḥ //

Samaścānaka, Kokanada, Gṛdhrapatra, Jambūka, Lohājavaktra, Javana, Kumbhavaktra, Kumbhaka (8).

मुण्डग्रीवश्च कृष्णौजा हंसवक्त्रश्च कुञ्जरः। एते रावणात्राश्च महावीरपराक्रमाः।।9।।

muṇḍagrīvaśca kṛṣṇaujā haṃsavaktraśca kuñjaraḥ /
ete rāvaṇātrāśca mahāvīraparākramāḥ //

Muṇḍagrīva, Kṛṣṇaujā, Haṃsavaktra and Kuñjara. All these sons of Rāvaṇa (listed from verse nos. 2 to 9) were very brave, courageous, valiant, strong, powerful, potent and formidable in battle. They possessed immense glory and fame in this respect (9).

[Note :—The total number of his sons = 55.]

बाहुशब्दैः सिंहनादैः पूरयन्तो दिशो दश। एषां सैन्यसहस्राणां सहस्राण्यर्बुदानि च।।10।।

bāhuśabdaiḥ siṃhanādaiḥ pūrayanto diśo daśa /
eṣāṃ sainyasahasrāṇāṃ sahasrāṇyarbudāni ca //

Filling all the corners of the 10 directions of the compass with the fearful tumult created by the clamour and clanging of their arms and armaments and the thunder of their chilling lion-like roar, the demon army consisted of thousands and millions of such ferocious and fearsome warriors (10).

नानाकृतिवयोरूपा विविधायुधपाणयः। कूर्मकुक्कुटवक्त्राश्च सर्वजम्भकवक्त्रकाः।।11।।

nānākṛtivayorūpā vividhāyudhapāṇayaḥ /
kūrmakukkuṭavaktrāśca sarvajambhakavaktrakāḥ //

The warriors had myriad of countenance and features, shapes and forms, and were of different age groups. They held different types of potent arms and armaments'.

[Now sage Vālmīki describes the faces of the demons to give an idea of the wide range of the horrifying creatures that aligned themselves against Śrī Rāma's army which consisted of humans, monkeys who had come with Sugrīva, bears who had accompanied Jāmbavanta and selected demons who were loyal to Vibhīṣaṇa.] 'The warriors had faces resembling those of a tortoise, cock, serpent—(11).

गोमायुमुखवक्त्राश्च शशोलूकमुखास्तथा। खरोष्ट्रवदनाश्चैव वराहवदनास्तथा।।12।।

gomāyumukhavaktrāśca śaśolūkamukhāstathā /
kharoṣṭravadanāścaiva varāhavadanāstathā //

—cow, hare, owl, camel, boar—(12).

मनुष्यमेषवक्त्राश्च शृगालवदनास्तथा। मार्जारशशवक्त्राश्च दीर्घवक्त्राश्च केचन।।13।।

manuṣyameṣavaktrāśca śṛgālavadanāstathā /
mārjāraśaśavaktrāśca dīrghavaktrāśca kecana //

—humans, ram or sheep, jackal, porqupine as well as the large faced cats, such as a tiger and leopard—(13).

नकुलोलूकवक्त्रश्च काकवक्त्रास्तथापरे। आखुबभ्रुकवक्त्राश्च मयूरवदनास्तथा।।14।।

nakulolūkavaktraśca kākavaktrāstathāpare /
ākhubabhrukavaktrāśca mayūravadanāstathā //

—mongoose, owl, crow, rat, swine, ape (or Babhruka—), peacock— (14).

मत्स्यमेषानवाश्चैव अजाविमहिषानना:। ऋक्षशार्दूलवक्त्राश्च द्वीपिसिंहाननास्तथा।।15।।

matsyameṣānavāścaiva ajāvimahiṣānanāḥ /
ṛkṣaśārdūlavaktrāśca dvīpisiṃhānanāstathā //

—fish (large and small), goat, buffalo, bear and tiger or lion faced. They resembled lions or tigers seated on a throne, crouching and ready to pounce on their prey (15).

[Note :—The word 'Siṃhāsana' and its prefix 'dvīpa' indicates this posture, much like the 'phoenix'.]

भीमा गजाननाश्चैव तथा नक्रमुखास्तथा। गोखरोष्ट्रमुखाश्चान्ये वृषदंशमुखास्तथा।।16।।

bhīmā gajānanāścaiva tathā nakramukhāstathā /
gokharoṣṭramukhāścānye vṛṣadaṃśamukhāstathā //

Some had faces resembling those of mammoth elephants while others were like ferocious crocodiles or alligators. Still others were like cows, donkeys, camels, huge bulls and other creatures with jaws having a row of sharp and pointed teeth (16).

महाजठरपादाङ्गाः स्तवकाक्षाश्च दुर्मुखाः। पारावतमुखाश्चान्ये तथा वृषमुखाः परे।।17।।

mahājaṭharapādāṅgāḥ stavakākṣāśca durmukhāḥ /
pārāvatamukhāścānye tathā vṛṣamukhāḥ pare //

Some had huge, bloated abdomens, long legs and big eyes, others had horrible faces like a weight of lead resembling the face of a hefty, supernatural bull (17).

कोकिलाभाननाश्चान्ये श्येनतित्तिरिकाननाः। कृकलासमुखश्चैव विरजोऽम्बरधारिणः।।18।।

kokilābhānanāścānye śyenatittirikānanāḥ /
kṛkalāsamukhaścaiva virajo'mbaradhāriṇaḥ //

Some had faces like different types of birds, such as a cuckoo, a hawk and a partridge; others were like a garden lizard. They wore white attire (battle gear) (18).

व्यासवक्त्राः शुकमुखाश्चण्डवक्त्रा शुभाननाः। आशीविषाश्चीरधरा गोनासावरणास्तथा।।19।।

vyāsavaktrāḥ śukamukhāścaṇḍavaktrā śubhānanāḥ /
āśīviṣāścīradharā gonāsāvaraṇāstathā //

Some had wide circular mouths such as those of snakes; others had mouths like that of a parrot. Some had tonsured heads, while others had pleasant looking ones. Some resembled snakes. Some wore clothes (and some were naked). Some had countenance like that of a Gonāsā (a type of serpent) (19).

स्थूलोदराः कृशाङ्गाश्च स्थूलाङ्गाश्च कृशोदराः। ह्रस्वग्रीवा महाकर्णा नानाव्यालविभूषणाः।। 20।।

sthūlodarāḥ kṛśāṅgāśca sthūlāṅgāśca kṛśodarāḥ /
hrasvagrīvā mahākarṇā nānāvyālavibhūṣaṇāḥ //

Some had rounded potbellies; others had emaciated body and stomach. Some head necks like that of a horse; others had large fan-like ears (like that of an elephant). Many wore ornaments consisting of snakes (and other such fearsome reptiles) (20).

गजेन्द्रचर्मवसनास्तथा कृष्णजिनाम्बराः। स्कन्धेमुखा द्विजश्रेष्ठ तथा ह्युदरतोमुखाः।।21।।

gajendracarmavasanāstathā kṛṣṇajināmbarāḥ /
skandhemukhā dvijaśreṣṭha tathā hyudaratomukhāḥ //

Some wore hide of elephant, while others wore black skin. Oh exalted sage (Bhāradvāja)! Some had their mouth embedded in their shoulders, while others had it in their stomach (21).

पृष्ठमुखा हनुमुखास्तथा जङ्घामुखास्तथा। पार्श्वाननाश्च बहवो नानादेशमुखास्तथा।।22।।

pṛṣṭhamukhā hanumukhāstathā jaṅghāmukhāstathā /
pārśvānanāśca bahavo nānādeśamukhāstathā //

Some had their mouths on their back, some were monkey faced. The mouths of others were on their thighs or their sides and at various others parts of the body (22).

तथा कीटपतङ्गानां सदृशास्या महाबलाः। नानाव्यालमुखाश्चान्ये बहुबाहुशिरोधराः।।23।।

tathā kīṭapataṅgānāṃ sadṛśāsyā mahābalāḥ /
nānāvyālamukhāścānye bahubāhuśirodharāḥ //

Some had their faces like those of insects and worms. All were very brave, strong, potent and valiant. There were some who had faces like the most terrifying snakes or lions. Then there were those who had numerous arms or countless heads (23).

[Note :—The word 'Vyāla' in the text means both a snake as well as a lion.]

नानावक्षोभुजाः केचिद्भुजङ्गवदनाः परे। खड्गमुखा वृकमुखा अपरे गरुडाननाः।।24।।

nānāvakṣobhujāḥ kecidbhujaṅgavadanāḥ pare /
khaḍgamukhā vṛkamukhā apare garuḍānanāḥ //

Then there were those who had many and varied shapes of their chests and arms. Many had python-like faces, some had bird like faces resembling a crow, while others were like Garuḍa (the legendary eagle or heron who is the mount of Lord Viṣṇu) (24).

[Note :—The word 'Vṛka' means a jackal or a wolf as well as a crow. In the present context, since birds are being referred to, the meaning has been interpreted as 'crow-like' instead of a jackal or a wolf. See also verse no. 31.]

चोलसंवृतगात्राश्च नानाफलकवाससः। नानावेषधराश्चान्ये नानामाल्यानुलेपनाः।।25।।

colasaṃvṛtagātrāśca nānāphalakavāsasaḥ /
nānāveṣadharāścānye nānāmālyānulepanāḥ //

[Their attires were also as fascinating as their bodies and appearances.] Some wore long cloaks designed like a long loose shirt, while others had straight jackets resembling an armour. They had so many types of attires that they cannot be described and were as varied as that army of demons. Some wore numerous types of garlands and necklaces and had rubbed or smeared a wide variety of pastes on their bodies (25).

नानावस्त्रधराश्चान्ये चर्मवासस एव च। उष्णीषिणो मुकुटिनः कम्बुग्रीवाः सुवर्चसः।।26।।

nānāvastradharāścānye carmavāsasa eva ca /
uṣṇīṣiṇo mukuṭinaḥ kambugrīvāḥ suvarcasaḥ //

They wore innumerable variety of clothes and hides, crowns and headgears. They had necks resembling a conch and had glorious radiance effusing from them (26).

किरीटिनः पञ्चशिखास्तथा कठिनमूर्द्धजाः। त्रिशिखा द्विशिखश्चैव तथा सप्तशिखा अपि।।27।।

kirīṭinaḥ pañcaśikhāstathā kaṭhinamūrddhajāḥ /
triśikhā dviśikhaścaiva tathā saptaśikhā api //

The 'Kirīṭas' (diadems or crests or tiaras) worn on their heads were of varying numbers (depending upon the number of heads they had as well as their designation and rank in the hierarchy of the army)—some had five, some three, two or even seven. They had strong and robust heads (27).

शिखण्डिनोऽमुकुटिनो मुण्डाश्च जटिलास्तथा। चित्रमालाधराः केचित्केचिद्रोमाननास्तथा।।28।।

śikhaṇḍino'mukuṭino muṇḍāśca jaṭilāstathā /
citramālādharāḥ kecitkecidromānanāstathā //

Some had a plume of hair on their heads and they didn't need to wear a crown, while others were bald and looked most formidable. They wore attractive garlands and necklaces. There were some who had hairs on their faces. [That is, they had long beards or mustaches.] (28)

विग्रहैकवशा नित्यमजेयाः सुरसत्तमैः। कृष्णा निर्मासवक्त्राश्च दीर्घपृष्टा निरूदराः।।29।।

vigrahaikavaśā nityamajeyāḥ surasattamaiḥ /
kṛṣṇā nirmāsavaktrāśca dīrghapṛṣṭā nirūdarāḥ //

They were always invincible even at the hands of Gods in a war. They were black complexioned. Some had faces with no flesh and muscles on them, i.e. there were only bones in their faces, while others had a large back with no abdomen. [That is, they had no belly, and like their faces, only the ribs and backbone was visible, that too protruded out like a bulge facing backwards.] (29)

दीर्घपृष्ठा स्थूलपृष्ठाः प्रलम्बोदरमेहनाः। महाभुजा ह्रस्वभुजा ह्रस्वगात्राश्च वामनाः ।।30।।

dīrghapṛṣṭhā sthūlapṛṣṭhāḥ pralambodaramehanāḥ /
mahābhujā hrasvabhujā hrasvagātrāśca vāmanāḥ //

Some had huge, broad and wide backs, while some had fleshy backs (as compared to their counterparts with a skeleton-like back as described in verse no. 29). Some had swollen bellies which bulged out and hung down like an overweight and stuffed gunny bag so much so that they had difficulty in walking or had to make an effort to carry their own weight. Some had huge and robust arms with both the biceps and the hands resembling the front legs of an elephant. Some were dwarfish in stature (30).

कुब्जाश्च ह्रस्वजङ्घाश्च हस्तिकर्णशिरोधराः। हस्तिनासाः कूर्मनासा वृकनासास्तथापरे ।।31।।

kubjāśca hrasvajaṅghāśca hastikarṇaśirodharāḥ /
hrastināsāḥ kūrmanāsā vṛkanāsāstathāpare //

Some were haunch-backed. Some had thighs, ears and heads resembling that of an elephant. Some had noses like that of an elephant's trunk or like a tortoise's snout or like that of a jackal or a wolf (31).

[Note :—The word 'Vṛka' means a crow as well as a jackal or a wolf as has been noted earlier in verse no. 24. In the present context where different animals are cited, the interpretation of a jackal or a wolf is more appropriate as compared to verse no. 24 where birds were cited.]

वारणेन्द्रनिभाश्चान्ये दीप्तिमन्तः स्वलंकृताः। पिङ्गाक्षाः शंकुकर्णाश्च वक्रनासास्तथापरे ।। 32 ।।

vāraṇendranibhāścānye dīptimantaḥ svalaṃkṛtāḥ /
piṅgākṣāḥ śaṃkukarṇāśca vakranāsāstathāpare //

Some had pointed noses like an arrow. Others were magnificent and glorious to look at with all their decorations and honours. Some had yellow-tinged eyes; some had pointed ears (protruding out from their faces like spikes from the axle of battle chariots); some had distorted noses (32).

पृथुदंष्ट्राः महादंष्ट्राः स्थूलोष्ठ हरिमूर्द्धजाः। नानापादौष्ठदंष्ट्राश्च नानाहस्तशिरोधराः ।।33।।

pṛthudaṃṣṭrāḥ mahādaṃṣṭrāḥ sthūloṣṭha harimūrddhajāḥ /
nānāpādauṣṭhadaṃṣṭrāśca nānāhastaśirodharā //

Some had large teeth, while others had horrible and terrible looking teeth. Some had flabby, thick lips and heavy, large heads which were as large as mountains. Then there were those who had many legs, lips, rows of teeth, hands and heads (33).

[Note :—The word 'Hari' used to describe their heads has many connotations—such as Viṣṇu, Śiva, Indra, Sun, Moon, Fire, Wind, monkey, lion, peacock, snake, horse, earth, name of a mountain. But the last meaning, 'a mountain' seems the most appropriate one in the context in which the word 'Hari' has been used here to describe their large heads.]

नानाचर्मभिराच्छन्ना नानावासाश्च सुव्रत। हृष्टाः परिपतन्ति स्म महापरिध बाहवः।।34।।
nānācarmabhirācchannā nānāvāsāśca suvrata /
hṛṣṭāḥ paripatanti sma mahāparidha bāhavaḥ //

Oh the righteous one (a reference to Bhāradvāja)! Covered by many types of animal hides as protective gears and wearing numerous varieties of attires used as armours, the fierce warriors of the demon army who had arms resembling Parighas (spears, lancets and spikes which have a long handle), started off cheerfully for battle (34).

दीर्घग्रीवा दीर्घनखा दीर्घपादशिरोभुजाः। पिङ्गाक्षा नीलकण्ठाश्च स्वर्णकर्णाश्च सुव्रत।।35।।
dīrghagrīvā dīrghanakhā dīrghapādaśirobhujāḥ /
piṅgākṣā nīlakaṇṭhāśca svarṇakarṇāśca suvrata //

[Sage Vālmīki continues with his vivid description of the demons who had accompanied the 1000-headed Rāvaṇa to the battlefield.]

Of the righteous one! Some had large necks, some had large nails, some had large feet, some had large heads and arms. Some had yellow eyes, some blue tinged necks and some had golden ears! (35).

वृकोदरनिभाः केचित्केचिदञ्जनसन्निभाः। श्वेताक्षा लोहितग्रीवा पिङ्गाक्षाश्चतथापरे।।36।।
vṛkodaranibhāḥ kecitkecidañjanasannibhāḥ /
śvetākṣā lohitagrīvā piṅgākṣāścatathāpare //

Some had stomach like that of a Vṛka; others were like huge mountains. Some had white coloured eyes, others had yellow ones. Some had red hued coloured necks (as compared to their friends who were blue-necked as in verse no. 35) (36).

[Note :—The word 'Vṛka' means a Kṣatriya besides a jackal, a wolf and a crow as cited previously in verse nos. 24 and 31. These latter meanings fit into verse nos. 31 and 24 respectively, but a 'Kṣatriya' is the meaning which fits best in the context of the present verse. So we can say that they were like brave Kṣatriya warriors with muscular stomachs instead of flabby ones.]

कल्माषबाहवो विप्र चित्रवर्णाश्च केचन। चामरापीडकनिभाः श्वेत लोहितकान्तयः ।।37।।
kalmāṣabāhavo vipra citravarṇāśca kecana /
cāmarāpīḍakanibhāḥ śveta lohitakāntayaḥ //

Oh Brāhmin (Bhāradvāja)! Some had black or striped arms (like the stripes present on a tiger or a zebra), some had multicoloured complexion. Some had arms resembling that of a peacock's plume or a whisk with a white handle and black or dark feathers. [That is, their fore arms were white like the stalk of a peacock's feather while their palms spread out like its apex and were dark in colour like the plume's hairs or the upper part of a whisk.] (37)

नानावर्णाः सुवर्णाश्च मयूरसदृशप्रभाः। पाशोद्यतकराः केचिद्यादितास्याः खराननाः ।।38।।
nānāvarṇāḥ suvarṇāśca mayūrasadṛśaprabhāḥ /
pāśodyatakarāḥ kecidyāditāsyāḥ kharānanāḥ //

Having a wide variety of shades of complexions, some looked golden while others were as charming as the peacock. Some held a chain-trap, a noose or a sling in their hands, while others opened their mouths wide and held sharp battle pickaxes in them (38).

शतघ्नीचक्रहस्ताश्च तथा मुसलपाणयः। असिमुद्‌गरहस्ताश्च दण्डहस्ताश्च केचन।।39।।
śataghnīcakrahastāśca tathā musalapāṇayaḥ /
asimudgarahastāśca daṇḍahastāśca kecana //

Some held 'Śataghni' (an ancient weapon of war) and Cakra (a razor sharp-edged circular offensive weapon used by throwing at the enemy; it rotated while in flight and sliced through the enemy's body much like a saw) in their hands; others held hammer-like pounders or rammers called Musala (to crush the enemy) Mudgara (a dumb-bell used to batter and pound the enemy) and batons in their hands besides strong and sharp edged spears or lancets (39).

गदाभुशुण्डिहस्ताश्च तथा तोमरपाणयः। आयुवैर्विविधैर्घोरैर्महात्मानो महौजसः ।।40।।
gadābhuśuṇḍihastāśca tathā tomarapāṇayaḥ /
āyuvairvividhairghorairmahātmāno mahaujasaḥ //

They held war maces called Gadā, Bhuṣuṇḍi and Tomara (a spear like weapon with large hammer like head) in their hands besides holding many other types of magnificent, potent and fierce arms and armaments. With their formidable weapons, the great demon army looked very ferocious, potent, powerful, majestic and invincible (40).

महाबला महावेगा असंख्याता विनिर्ययुः। घण्टाजालपिनद्धाङ्गा नमृतुस्ते रणाजिरे।।41।।
mahābalā mahāvegā asaṃkhyātā viniryayuḥ /
ghaṇṭājālapinaddhāṅgā namṛtuste raṇājire //

The army had great strength and punch; it was very powerful and potential. It moved with great force and speed. Its numbers were uncountable. It danced furiously and crazily in the battlefield to the accompaniment of the beating of the war drums and gongs (41).

कोटिशो विकृतरूक्षभाषिणो यातुधानगणसैन्यपालकाः।
दुद्रुवू रघुकुलावतंसकं गृहधावनपोथवादिनः।। 42।।
koṭiśo vikṛtarūkṣabhāṣiṇo yātudhānagaṇasainyapālakāḥ /
dudruvū raghukulāvataṃsakaṃ gṛhadhāvanapothavādinaḥ //

Millions of ugly and horrible looking demon warriors and their commanders and generals who were most rude, arrogant and impolite when they spoke, attacked Śrī Rāma from all sides, shouting, thundering and yelling loudly, chillingly and sternly, 'catch them, catch them', as they dashed and lunged forward to launce the offensive against him (Śrī Rāma) who was the caretaker, sustainer, protector and well-wisher of not only his own clan of Raghu but also that of the demon army (because Śrī Rāma is the merciful, compassionate, magnanimous, benevolent and benefactor Supreme Being of the universe, and he has launched this campaign just in order to get rid of fierce and cruel demons who were tormenting other creatures of the world, and surely not the good ones amongst them as is evident from the fact that he had the 10-headed Rāvaṇa's younger brother Vibhīṣaṇa, who was also of the demons race, with him) (42).

Thus ends Canto 19 of the ancient epic called Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa written by sage Vālmīki describing the demon army and the launch of the offensive in the war.

* * *

Canto 20

The war—its description

This Canto describes the battle between the armies of Śrī Rāma and the 1000-headed Rāvaṇa in the first phase of the war. It was a closely fought, one to one duel, ruthless and merciless as any battle is. In the end however, the monkeys got an upper hand over the demons, though the latter far outnumbered the former.

धनूंषि च विधुन्वानस्ततो वैश्रवणानुजः। कोऽयं किमर्थमायात इति चिन्तापरोऽभवत्॥1॥
dhanūṃṣi ca vidhunvānastato vaiśravaṇānujaḥ /
ko'yaṃ kimarthamāyāta iti cintāparo'bhavat //

Then that 'junior Vaiśrāvaṇa' (i.e. the son of sage Viśravā; here meaning the thousand headed Rāvaṇa) twanged his formidable bow and wondered in amazement, 'Who is this fellow, and why has he come?' (1).

[Note :—A father's son is called a junior or the younger one with the same surname. The word 'Anuja' generally means a younger brother, but since the 10-headed Rāvaṇa was the younger sibling (see Canto 17, verse no. 42), here the word refers to the 'junior Viśravā' or the son of sage Viśravā. See also verse no. 3.]

ततो गगनसम्भूता वाणी समुद्यत। भो रावण महावीर्य रामोऽयं समुपागतः॥2॥
tato gaganasambhūtā vāṇī samudyata /
bho rāvaṇa mahāvīrya rāmo'yaṃ samupāgataḥ //

At this, an invisible voice from the sky said, 'Oh the most brave and gallant Rāvaṇa! This is Śrī Rāma who has come here! (2).

राघवोऽयमयोध्याया राजा धर्मस्वरूपधृक्। लङ्कायां निहतो येन दाराकर्षी तवानुजः॥3॥
rāghavo'yamayodhyāyā rājā dharmasvarūpadhṛk /
laṅkāyāṃ nihato yena dārākarṣī tavānujaḥ //

He is also known as Rāghava, the king of Ayodhyā. He is an embodiment of the virtues known collectively as 'Dharma' (i.e. he personifies all that is righteous, noble, good and virtuous in this world). He is the one who has slayed your younger brother in Laṅkā (3).

त्वद्बाधार्थमिहायातो विभीषण वसुप्रदः। भ्रातृभिर्वानरैर्ऋक्षै राक्षसैर्मानुषैर्युतः॥4॥
tvadvādhārthamihāyāto vibhīṣaṇa vasupradaḥ /
bhrātṛbhirvānarairṛkṣai rākṣasairmānuṣairyutaḥ //

He is the one who has given the kingdom of Laṅkā to Vibhīṣaṇa (after killing the 10-headed Rāvaṇa). He has arrived here to slay you too; he is accompanied by his brothers, monkeys (the army of Sugrīva), bears (the army of Jāmbavanta), demons (owing allegiance to Vibhīṣaṇa) and humans (the army of Ayodhyā)' (4).

श्रुत्वा ह्यमानुषं वाक्यं रावणो लोकरावणः। क्रोधमाहारयामास द्विगुण मुनिपुङ्गव।।5।।

śrutvā hyamānuṣaṃ vākyaṃ rāvaṇo lokarāvaṇaḥ /
krodhamāhārayāmāsa dviguṇa munipuṅgava //

Oh exalted sage (Bhāradvāja)! Hearing this super human voice (or a non-human voice coming from some supernatural hidden source), Rāvaṇa, who was famous as the one who made the world weep and wail, became twice as much angry and annoyed as he was before. He said most contemptuously and vehemently—(5).

हन्यतां वध्यतामेष मानुषो रिपुसंज्ञितः। मम विश्वजितः साक्षाद्रणाय समुपस्थितः।।6।।

hanyatāṃ vadhyatāmeṣa mānuṣo ripusaṃjñitaḥ /
mama viśvajitaḥ sākṣādraṇāya samupasthitaḥ //

'Beat back and thrash this human enemy; kill him. He has dared to come and fight with me who am 'the vanquisher and conqueror of the entire world' (6).

इत्युक्त्वा बाणजालाति चक्रपर्वत तोमरान्। चिक्षेप सहसा रक्षः पुष्पकोपरि सुव्रतः।।7।।

ityuktvā bāṇajālāti cakraparvata tomarān /
cikṣepa sahasā rakṣaḥ puṣpakopari suvrataḥ //

Oh the righteous one ! Saying this, that demon showered various weapons upon Śrī Rāma, such as a torrent of arrows which formed a net around him, Cakras (razor sharp, serrated discus), mountains or huge boulders and Tomaras (large spear-like weapon with a hammer-like head) etc. on the Puṣpaka chariot-cum-plane (upon which Śrī Rāma sat in the battlefield) (7).

[Note :—This divine plane of the Gods, called Puṣpaka, had the great ability to metamorphose into a war chariot when felt necessary. Primarily, it was an air plane.]

राक्षसी सा चमूर्घोरा वानरानृक्षमानुषान्। चखादकांश्चिदपरान्पोथयामासदर्पितान्।।8।।

rākṣasī sā camūrghorā vānarānṛkṣamānuṣān /
cakhādakāṃścidaparānpothayāmāsadarpitān //

His (Rāvaṇa's) most formidable and fierce demon army began their ruthless attack upon Śrī Rāma's army, devouring and gobbling up some of the monkeys, bears and humans and destroying others by killing them (8).

सा च शाखामृगी सेनाराघवस्य च मानुषी। रावणस्यानुगान्वीराञ्जघान बाणपर्वतैः।।9।।

sā ca śākhāmṛgī senārāghavasya ca mānuṣī /
rāvaṇasyānugānvīrāñjaghāna bāṇaparvataiḥ //

Repulsing the attack, Rāghava's army consisting of humans and monkeys started to crush Rāvaṇa's brave warriors with their own arrows and mountains thrown at them in retaliation (9).

तेऽन्योन्यवधमिच्छन्तो युयुधुः सैनिकोत्तमाः। पेतुम्लुश्च मुमुहू राक्षसा वानरा नराः।।10।।

te'nyonyavadhamicchanto yuyudhuḥ sainikottamāḥ /
petumluśca mumuhū rākṣasā vānarā narāḥ //

These two excellent armies crashed into each other headlong, fighting and hitting the opponent with the intention to kill. [That is, they fought most mercilessly, ruthlessly, uncompromisingly, viciously and ferociously.] Demons as well as monkeys and human began to fall down in the fierce battle that ensued as they got repeatedly and gravely wounded in the attacks (10).

ततो रामो महाबाहुर्भरतो लक्ष्मणस्तथा। शत्रुघ्नो हनुमान्वीरः सुग्रीवो जाम्बवांस्तथा।।11।।
अन्ये च नलनीलाद्या विभीषणपुरोगमाः। युयुधस्ते महाघोरं महाघोरे रणाजिरे।।12।।

tato rāmo mahābāhurbharato lakṣmaṇastathā /
śatrughno hanumānvīraḥ sugrīvo jāmbavāṃstathā //
anye ca nalanīlādyā vibhīṣaṇapurogamāḥ /
yuyudhaste mahāghoraṃ mahāghore raṇājire //

Seeing their army being ruthlessly beaten and getting crushed and falling apart, the most brave Śrī Rāma who was strong at arms, accompanied by Bharata, Lakṣmaṇa, Śatrughna, the brave Hanumāna, Sugrīva, Jāmbavanta (11) and others, including Nala, Nīla and Vibhīṣaṇa, moved forward and started to fight the most formidable and terrible battle themselves (12). [11-12]

निर्जग्मुश्च विनेदुश्च चिक्रीड्डुश्चैव राक्षसाः। जहृषुश्च महात्मानः संग्रामेष्वनिवर्तिनः।।13।।

nirjagmuśca vineduśca cikrīñuścaiva rākṣasāḥ /
jahṛṣuśca mahātmānaḥ saṃgrāmeṣvanivartinaḥ //

They came out in the open, and raising a tumultuous and chilling war cry, they began to play a game or sport with the demons. Those great warriors had a formidable reputation that they never turned their backs in the battlefield (or they never shied or ran away in the face of the enemy). Those great souls greatly enjoyed playing this game of war with their equally strong and powerful, aggressive opponents (13).

उत्कृष्टा स्फोटितैर्नादैश्चचालेव च मेदिनी। रक्षसां सिंहनादैश्च परिपूर्ण नभः स्थलम्।।14।।
utkṛṣṭā sphoṭitairnādaiścacāleva ca medinī /
rakṣasāṃ siṃhanādaiśca paripūrṇa nabhaḥ sthalam //

Their exuberant, thunderous and chilling war cry and shrill yells made the earth shake and tremble. The sky and the land reverberated with the lion-like roar raised by the demons (14).

ते प्रायुध्यंत मुदितो राक्षसेन्द्रा महाबलाः। प्रययुर्वानरानीकं समुद्यतशिलायुधम्।।15।।
te prāyudhyaṃta mudito rākṣasendrā mahābalāḥ /
prayayurvānarānīkaṃ samudyataśilāyudham //

The most strong, powerful and valiant demons fought cheerfully. They took large rocks and boulders in their hands and moved towards the monkey army menacingly (15).

युयोध राक्षसं सैन्यं नरराक्षसवानरैः। रहस्त्यश्वरथसम्बाधं किंकिणीशतनादितम्।।16।।
yuyodha rākṣasaṃ sainyaṃ nararākṣasavānaraiḥ /
rahastyaśvarathasambādhaṃ kiṃkiṇīśatanāditam //

The enemy demon army (of the 1000-headed Rāvaṇa) fought with the army of humans, demons (owing allegiance to Vibhīṣaṇa) and monkeys (the army of Sugrīva), i.e. the army of Śrī Rāma. There was a horrifying, clamorous cacophony of sounds made by war elephant, horses and chariots as well as the clanking of hundreds of bracelets as opponents fought a hand to hand duel (16).

नीलजीमूतसङ्काशैः समुद्यतशिलायुधैः। दीप्तानलविप्रख्यैर्नैर्ऋतैः सर्वतो वृतम्।।17।।
nīlajīmūtasaṅkāśaiḥ samudyataśilāyudhaiḥ /
dīptānalaviprakhyairnairṛtaiḥ sarvato vṛtam //

Holding huge boulders resembling dark blue clouds (i.e. the rain bearing clouds appearing during the rainy season), the demons who resembled a fiercely burning fire by their ferocity and furious demeanours or even a relentlessly scorching sun, filled all the direction of the battlefield, surrounding or encircling it from all the sides (17).

> [Note :—The allegory to the clouds is very apt here. During the rainy season, dark clouds appear from the horizon and cover the entire canopy of the sky. Similarly, the demons here covered the entire area of the battlefield from all the sides, thundering and roaring like the rumbling of those clouds and the clap of thunder.]

तद्वीक्ष्य राक्षसबलं संरब्धाश्च प्लवङ्गमाः। क्रुद्धं तद्राक्षसं सैन्यं जघ्नुर्द्रुमशिलायुधैः।।18।।

tadvīkṣya rākṣasabalaṃ saṃrabdhāśca plavaṅgamāḥ /
kruddhaṃ tadrākṣasaṃ sainyaṃ jaghnurdrumaśilāyudhaiḥ //

Seeing the powerful force of the demon army, the monkeys became very furious and gathered themselves together. They retaliated by pounding the demons with huge trees and boulders (18).

ते पादशिलाशैलैस्तां चक्रुर्वृष्टिमुत्तमाम्। वृक्षौघैर्वजसङ्काशैर्हरयो भीमविक्रमाः।।19।।
शिखरैः शिखराभांस्ते यातुधानानमदैयन्। निर्जघ्नुःसमरे क्रुद्धा हरयो राक्षसर्षभान्।।20।।

te pādaśilāśailaistāṃ cakrurvṛṣṭimuttamām /
vṛkṣaughairvajasāśairharayo bhīmavikramāḥ //
śikharaiḥ śikharābhāṃste yātudhānānamadaiyan /
nirjaghnuḥsamare kruddhā harayo rākṣasarṣabhān //

They (the monkeys) rained trees, boulders, rocks and arrows upon the enemy. Those most terrible, formidable and gallant monkeys fought the demons with trees (using them as batons, battering rams and Tomaras, the long handled hammer) (19). They hit the huge mountain-like demons with equally huge rocks and boulders. In this way, those furious monkeys tormented the demons in the battlefield (20). [19-20]

केचिद्रथगतान्वीरान्गजवाजिस्थितानपि। निर्जघ्नुः सहसाप्लुत्य यातुधानान्प्लवङ्गमाः।।21।।

kecidrathagatānvīrāngajavājisthitānapi /
nirjaghnuḥ sahasāplutya yātudhānānplavaṅgamāḥ //

Some of the brave demons were on chariots, others warriors were on the backs of war elephants and horses. The monkeys leapt, jumped and skipped obstacles repeatedly to hit them hard on their mounts themselves (21).

removed, the rough and raw metal is exposed. This analogy is used here to say that the skin from the bodies of the demon warriors was torn away and their raw bones were exposed. As a result, blood streamed down from these wounds on their bodies and flowed onto the battlefield.]

तस्मिंस्तदा संयति सम्प्रवृत्ते कोलाहले राक्षसराजधान्याम्।
सहृष्यमाणेषु च वानरेषु निपात्यमानेषु च राक्षसेषु।।30।।
tasmiṃstadā saṃyati sampravṛtte kolāhale rākṣasarājadhānyām /
sahṛṣyamāṇeṣu ca vānareṣu nipātyamāneṣu ca rākṣaseṣu //

With such a no-holds-barred and horrendous battle raging, in which the monkeys had an upper hand and were cheerfully gaining ground over the demons while the latter were getting trounced and beaten back, there was a great turmoil in the city of the demons (30).

[Note :—When the news from the battle front reached the city that the demon army is losing ground and the warriors are biting dust and the battle was swinging in favour of Śrī Rāma's army consisting chiefly of the monkey, there was a serious alarm and a horrifying tumult rose in the city of Puṣkara. There is no wonder in it, because everyone in the city knew what fate held out for its residents when the city would finally fall to the invading army of Śrī Rāma consisting chiefly of demons and monkeys—there would be a large scale slaughter, plunder and pillage once the monkeys managed to enter the city gates either after victory or by breaching the security parameter even during the war.]

प्रभज्य मानेषु महाबलेषु महर्षयो भूतगणाश्च नेदुः।
तेनापि सर्वे हरयः प्रहृष्टा विनेदुराक्ष्वेडितसिंहनादैः।।31।।
prabhajya māneṣu mahābaleṣu maharṣayo bhūtagaṇāśca neduḥ /
tenāpi sarve harayaḥ prahṛṣṭā vinedurākṣveḍitasiṃhanādaiḥ //

When the great army of the demons was dispersed, shattered and battered as they were by the relentless attack of the monkeys, the great sages as well as the ghosts and spirits of the battlefield made a thunderous applause to celebrate the occasion. This further encouraged the monkeys who became excited and exhilarated with ecstasy. They flayed, shook and swayed their arms in joyous abundance, exulting and celebrating the occasion, cheering and roaring thunderously like a lion (31).

[Note :—The sages felt happy because Śrī Rāma was gaining ground while the ghosts and spirits felt exulted because they had a lot of dead bodies to feast upon, a lot of blood to drink and skeletons to play with. This was the environment that they liked.]

Thus ends Canto 20 of the ancient epic called Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa written by sage Vālmīki describing the battle between Śrī Rāma and Rāvaṇa.

* * *

Canto 21

Rāvaṇa trounces and disperses Śrī Rāma's huge army

This Canto marks the second phase of war. Seeing that his demon army was being decimated and dispersed by Śrī Rāma's army, Rāvaṇa took the lead himself and plunged head on in the battle. Not wishing to shed unnecessary blood, he used a special weapon known as 'Vāyavyāstra' or the 'wind-weapon' which created such a tremendous force of wind pressure that the entire army of Śrī Rāma was sucked out of the battlefield and thrown away to as far afield places as Ayodhyā, Kiṣkindhā and Laṅkā, from where the soldiers of Śrī Rāma's army had come, that they landed there in a dazed and stupefied condition. The scared men found themselves in Ayodhyā; the stunned monkeys in Kiṣkindhā; the terrified demons of Vibhīṣaṇa in Laṅkā. Meanwhile, only Śrī Rāma and Sītā, sitting in their Puṣpaka chariot-cum-plane remained in the battlefield at Puṣkara to face the wrath of Rāvaṇa and his army. Śrī Rāma himself was greatly amazed at this marvelous spectacle and magical feat, and he became angry and prepared himself for a do or die battle to kill Rāvaṇa. Meanwhile, seeing that his stupendous powers have failed to have their subduing effect on Śrī Rāma and scaring him into submission, Rāvaṇa became all the more furious, vehement and wrathful.

ततो रथं मारुततुल्यवेगमारुह्य शक्तिं निशितां प्रगृह्य।
स रावणो रामबलं प्रहृष्ठो विवेश हि मीनो हि यथार्णवौधम्।।1।।
tato ratham mārutatulyavegamāruhya śaktiṃ niśitāṃ pragṛhya /
sa rāvaṇo rāmabalaṃ prahṛṣṭho viveśa hi mīno hi yathārṇavaudham //

Finding that his army has been demoralised and trounced, Rāvaṇa strode upon a chariot which was as swift and agile and maneuverable as the wind. He took in hand a formidable 'Śakti' (an arrow or spear like weapon which had special powers and was very potent like electric; in modern parlance, a 'missile') and dashed into the army of Śrī Rāma just like a fish (e.g. a huge whale and shark) plunges into the water of the ocean. [That is, he sliced through the rank and file of Śrī Rāma's army cutting through the huge throng of monkeys swiftly, and scattering them hither and thither, leaving them in total disarray.] (1)

सवानरान्हीनबलान्निरोक्ष्य प्राणेन दीप्तेन रराज राजा।
एकक्षणेनेन्द्ररिपुर्महात्मा निहन्तुमैच्छन्नरवानरांश्च ।।2।।
savānarānhīnabalānnirokṣya prāṇena dīptena rarāja rājā/
ekakṣaṇenendraripurmahātmā nihantumaicchannaravānarāṃśca //

When the king of demons, Rāvaṇa, saw the terrified monkeys, the thoughts of his ability of annihilating his enemies, the monkeys, in a fraction of moment appeared in his mind and heart. But at the same time, the greatness and virtues of his noble Ātmā stood up and intervened to make him think again. [That is, his subconscious mind had told him that this was not good.] (2)

मनसा चिन्तयामास सहस्र कन्धरः स्वराट्। एते क्षुद्राः समायाताः प्राणांस्त्यक्त्वा धनानि च।।3।।
द्वीपान्तरं महत्प्राप्य मम युद्धाभिकांक्षिणः। किं स्यान्म महतैः क्षुद्रैर्नरराक्षसवानरैः।।4।।
manasā cintayāmāsa sahasra kandharaḥ svarāṭ/
ete kṣudrāḥ samāyātāḥ prāṇāṃstyaktvā dhanāni ca //
dvīpāntaraṃ mahatprāpya mama yuddhābhikāṃkṣiṇaḥ/
kiṃ syānma mahataiḥ kṣudrairnararākṣasavānaraiḥ //

That 1000-headed Rāvaṇa thought to himself, 'These lowly and stupid fellows have abandoned their property, wealth and homestead, and have staked their lives to come for battle here [3]. They landed inside the island and wish to gain fame by fighthing with me. What will I gain by killing these lowly, humble and harmless humans, monkeys and demons ? (4). [3-4]

यस्माद्देशात्समायातास्तं देशं प्रापयाम्यहम्। क्षुल्लकेषु शराघातं न प्रशंसन्ति पण्डिताः।।5।।
yasmāddeśātsamāyātāstaṃ deśaṃ prāpayāmyaham/
kṣullakeṣu śarāghātaṃ na praśaṃsanti paṇḍitāḥ //

I shall send them back to the country from where they have come. Wise ones do not honour, praise or laud someone for attacking those who are humble and lowly, with arrows and other weapons' (5).

इति सञ्चिन्त्य धनुषावायव्यास्त्रं युयोज ह। तेनास्त्रेण नरा ऋक्षा वानरा राक्षसा हि ते।।6।।
यस्माद्यस्थात्समायातास्तं तं देशं प्रयापिताः। गलहस्तिकलया विप्र चोराभ्राजभटा इव।।7।।

iti sañcintya dhanuṣāvāyavyāstraṃ yuyoja ha/
tenāstreṇa narā ṛkṣā vānarā rākṣasā hi te//
yasmādyasthātsamāyātāstaṃ taṃ deśaṃ prayāpitāḥ/
galahastikalayā vipra corābhrājabhaṭā iva//

Thinking and deciding thus, Rāvaṇa mounted his bow with an arrow known as 'Vāyavyāstra'. When he used that magnificent and stupendously powerful weapon, all the humans, monkeys or demons of Śrī Rāma's army (6) were flung back to the places from where they had come even as thieves, who had stealthily entered the palace grounds on the sly, are forcefully rounded up by the guards of a king who catch hold of them by their throats and eject them out of the palace when they are caught red-handed (7). [6-7]

[Note :—(i) The 'Vāyavyāstra' is a missile-like arrow which could create a very powerful blast of wind, such as the one formed during a strong tornado or a gale which could sweep off everything around with its stupendous force. It was like detonating a 'sonic bomb' or a 'vacuum bomb' which created such a tremendous and strong force of wind, caused by a powerful vacuum in the epicenter of the detonation, causing a powerful shock effect which caused everything to be flung around. The explosion created a wall of sonic waves which resembled a sudden punch of a powerful gust of gale-strong wind lashing at a ship in the ocean. It is a well established fact that strong tornadoes can lift even heavy vehicles off the ground and tear off the roofs of houses and throw them like nine pins to far away places. This weapon combined a number of powerful wind-related forces witnessed during different types of storms, such as a tornado, a gale, a typhoon, a cyclone, a hurricane and a whirl wind appearing in rapid succession.

(ii) Verse nos. 2-7 show clearly that this elder brother of the Rāvaṇa of Laṅkā was not as ruthless and blood thirsty, not as wicked and war mongering as his younger sibling. Verse nos. 3-4 show that he did not wish to unnecessarily spill blood of soldiers who were only carrying out their duties and obeying the commands of their king, Śrī Rāma. Frankly speaking, what option did they have except to obey their Lord Śrī Rāma and fight with Rāvaṇa? Rāvaṇa's righteous and virtuous heart, his Ātmā, his consciousness, his wisdom and noble thoughts forbade him from killing those who were innocent and were merely doing their duties and had no personal grudge against him. So instead of slaughtering them without any cause, something which he could have done in an instant, he used the 'wind weapon' to throw them away from the battle front inspite of the fact that thousands of his own demons soldiers were gravely wounded or killed in the battle. This also shows that he was not vindictive by nature.]

ते सर्वे स्वगृहं प्राप्ता अस्त्रवेगेन विस्मिताः। क्व स्थिताः क्व समायातामन्यन्त स्वप्न एव तैः।।8।।

te sarve svagṛhaṃ prāptā astravegena vismitāḥ/
kva sthitāḥ kva samāyātāmanyanta svapna eva taiḥ//

All of them were sent back to their respective homes by the force of that weapon. When they found themselves suddenly and unexpectedly in their own homes, they were absolutely stunned, dazed and amazed, wondering in astonishment, 'Where were we and where have we suddenly come?' They thought that they were day dreaming (8).

प्रलयानिलवेगेन अस्त्रेण वञ्चिता भृशम्। भरतो लक्ष्मणश्चापि शत्रुघ्नो हनुमांस्तथा।।9।।

pralayānilavegena astreṇa vañcitā bhṛśam/
bharato lakṣmaṇaścāpi śatrughno hanumāṃstathā//

When that stupendous wind force resembling the powerful thrust of the wind blowing during the dooms day struck with a powerful blow or punch, it also severely hurt and knocked down unconscious Bharata, Lakṣmaṇa, Śatrughna and Hanumāna in its aftermath (9).

सुग्रीवनलनीलाद्या हरयोऽनिलरंहस। विभीषणपुरोगाश्च राक्षसाः क्रूरविक्रमाः।।10।।

sugrīvanalanīlādyā harayo'nilaraṃhasa/
vibhīṣaṇapurogāśca rākṣasāḥ krūravikramāḥ//

Sugrīva, Nala, Nīla and other chief monkeys as well as Vibhīṣaṇa and other fierce demons who were valorous, valiant, powerful, potent, strong, courageous and brave too were injured (and knocked out) by that powerful blast which inflicted serious injury upon them by its punch (10).

वानराश्च नरा ऋक्षा राक्षसा अक्षता गृहम्। प्राप्यातिविस्मिताः सर्वे शोचन्ते साममेवपि।।11।।

vānarāśca narā ṛkṣā rākṣasā akṣatā gṛham/
prāpyātivismitāḥ sarve śocante rāmamevapi//

Monkeys, humans, bears and demons—all were severely wounded. Suddenly finding themselves in their homes, they were completely taken aback, perplexed and bewildered as to what has happened. They were worried and anxious about the welfare of Śrī Rāma (11).

पुष्करे पुष्पकेतिष्ठत्ससीतो राघवः परम्। आस्ते स्म नास्त्रवेगोऽयं रामं चालयितुं क्षमः ।।12।।
puṣkare puṣpaketiṣṭhatsasīto rāghavaḥ param /
āste sma nāstravego'yaṃ rāmaṃ cālayituṃ kṣamaḥ //

Only Rāghava (Śrī Rāma) along with Sītā remained behind in Puṣkara, seated on the Puṣpaka chariot-cum-plane. The formidable weapon shot by Rāvaṇa (the Vāyavyāstra) failed to affect Śrī Rāma; it could not move him and Sītā from their position in the battlefield (12).

[Note :—This verse clearly shows that only Śrī Rāma and Sītā remained behind at the battle front after the sonic bomb was detonated by Rāvaṇa. All the rest of their strong and powerful army was thrown away by the crushing impact of the powerful blow. This weapon created such a stupendous wall of sound waves that anything that came in its way was simply swept or blown away. The question now arises as to why Śrī Rāma and Sītā were not too blown away by its blast. The answer lies in the fact that the Puṣpaka was a special plane of Gods and it must have been firmly entrached on the ground and too heavy to be blown away by the blast. This explains why Śrī Rāma and Sītā could not be blown away along with others.]

महर्षयोऽपि तत्रासन्किमेतदिति विस्मिताः। सापि सीता महाभागा तत्रास्ते स्म शुचिस्मिता ।।13।।
maharṣayo'pi tatrāsankimetaditi vismitāḥ /
sāpi sītā mahābhāgā tatrāste sma śucismitā //

Even the wise, erudite, all knowing and sagacious great sages were also dumbfounded and perplexed, wondering in bewilderment, 'What is this; what has happened so suddenly?'. Inspite of all these consternations, bewilderments, perplexities and confusions, the most glorious, fortunate, auspicious and great Sītā remained unruffled and unfazed (as if nothing unexpected or surprising has happened and there was nothing to be frightened of). She remained calm and poised, and smiled pleasantly, amused by the stunning developments (13).

गन्धर्वनगराकारं दृष्ट्वा रामबलं महत्। स्वस्तीतिवादिनः सौम्यशान्ति जेपुर्महर्षयः ।।14।।
gandharvanagarākāraṃ dṛṣṭvā rāmabalaṃ mahat /
svastītivādinaḥ saumyaśānti jepurmaharṣayaḥ //

Finding that the battlefield resembled the city of Gandharvas and not seeing Śrī Rāma's army anywhere, the sages and seers (who were watching the proceedings along with the Gods from the sky) were very alarmed and felt extremely frightened. They started the incantation of divine Mantras (holy words) invoked to allay bad omens and counter the effects of evils spirits. They exclaimed happily, 'Let there be peace; let there be auspiciousness; let there be welfare and wellbeing all around!' (14)

> [Note :—The allusion to the city of Gandharvas is generally used to indicate some scenario which is deceptive, outwordly, imaginary and illusionary in nature. When the sages and seers did not see the army of Śrī Rāma on the ground in the battlefield, they could not figure out what has happened so suddenly and unexpectedly to it, where has such a huge army vanished in a fraction of a moment. This left them completely bewildered and confused. So they chanted holy Mantras to invoke divine powers to intercede on their behalf and prevent any adverse and calamitous happening, and to calm down any possibility of a catastrophe from unfolding, especially because Śrī Rāma and Sītā were alone in the battlefield.]

अन्तरिक्षचराः सर्वे हाहाकारं प्रचक्रिरे। देवा अग्निमुखा विप्र किं कृतं रावणेन हि।।15।।

antarikṣacarāḥ sarve hāhākāraṃ pracakrire/
devā agnimukhā vipra kiṃ kṛtaṃ rāvaṇena hi//

The heavenly creatures (such as Gods and spirits of ancestors) lamented and wailed in distress and dismay. Gods such as the Fire-God exclaimed in amazement, 'What has Rāvaṇa done?' (15).

गरुडस्थो यदा विष्णु रावणं हन्तुमागत। लीलया लवणाम्भोधौ क्षिप्तो विष्णुः सनातनः।।16।।

garuḍastho yadā viṣṇu rāvaṇaṃ hantumāgata/
līlayā lavaṇāmbhodhau kṣipto viṣṇuḥ sanātanaḥ//

According to tradition, in some ancient time, when Viṣṇu had mounted the legendary Garuḍa (his mount, the bird heron or eagle) and had come to slay Rāvaṇa, the latter had playfully, even without any effort or exertion on his part, flung Viṣṇu away towards the salty ocean (16).

साट्टहासं विनद्योच्चैः राक्षसा वामपाणिना। ततः प्रभृति देवाश्च गन्धर्वाः किन्नरा नराः।।17।।
गन्धमस्य न गृहन्ति शार्दूलस्येव जम्बुकाः। सोऽयं विष्णुर्दशरथाज्जातो देवः सनातनः।।18।।

sāṭṭahāsaṃ vinadyoccaiḥ rākṣasā vāmapāṇinā/
tataḥ prabhṛti devāśca gandharvāḥ kinnarā narāḥ//

gandhamasya na gṛhanti śārdūlasyeva jambukāḥ /
so'yaṃ viṣṇurdaśarathājjāto devaḥ sanātanaḥ //

He (Rāvaṇa) had laughed aloud tauntingly and scornfully, managing to do this stupendous and unprecedented feat with his left hand (i.e. very easily, without much of an effort and most indignantly). From that day, the Gods, Gandharvas (semi-Gods who are heavenly musicians), Kinnaras (semi-Gods who are heavenly dancers and singers), Apsarās (heavenly courtesans) etc. loathe and shy away even from Rāvaṇa's smell (i.e. they run away as soon as they get a hint that Rāvaṇa is around) just like jackals get terrified and despise the notion of being within a smelling distance of a lion. That same eternal and ancient Lord (Viṣṇu) has taken birth as the son of Daśaratha (and this precedent was a cause of great anxiety and consternation amongst the Gods) (17-18).

[Note :—Verse nos. 16-18 give the reason for the worry of the sages and seers. They knew this Rāvaṇa had the potential of flinging away even Viṣṇu. He has demonstrated his abilities by throwing or flinging the entire army of Śrī Rāma by a single arrow. So they feared for the worst. How Rāvaṇa failed to do so was a mystery for them. Perhaps this single event explains the gravity and importance of the presence of Sītā in the battlefield, and especially the importance of this Rāmāyaṇa called Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa. Obviously, if all the factors were constant, it was only the presence of Sītā sitting in the Puṣpaka plane that prevented it from being blown away. This shows that Sītā was more powerful and had greater potentials than Śrī Rāma, and she would be instrumental in the slaying of the 1000-headed Rāvaṇa as will be evident in the unfolding drama which follows in the following Cantos.]

अस्माकं भागधेयेन रामो जयतु रावणम्। परस्परं सुराः सर्वे वदन्तोऽन्तर्हिता स्थिताः ।।19।।

asmākaṃ bhāgadheyena rāmo jayatu rāvaṇam /
parasparaṃ surāḥ sarve vadanto'ntarhitā sthitāḥ //

All the Gods stationed in the sky (heavens), who were watching the proceeding of the war most eagerly and anxiously, said among themselves, 'Let Śrī Rāma obtain victory over Rāvaṇa due to our own good luck! [That is, we stake all the good fortunes that we have accumulated, all the good and righteous deeds that we have done, and all the prayers, religious activities and blessings we can muster in order to empower and enable Śrī Rāma in defeating this great demon.] (19)

ननर्द च सहस्त्रास्याः क्षुद्रं मत्वा स राघवम्। विसिष्मिये च रामोऽपि तद्दृष्ट्वा कर्म दुष्करम्।।20।।

nanarda ca sahasrāsyāḥ kṣudraṃ matvā sa rāghavam /
visiṣimaye ca rāmo'pi taddṛṣṭvā karma duṣkaram //

Treating Rāghava (Śrī Rāma) as inconsequential, lowly and humble, the 1000-headed Rāvaṇa roared triumphantly, defiantly and scornfully. Observing his most formidable and astounding feat (of flinging away the entire army in a split second), Śrī Rāma was himself amazed, bewildered and mystified (20).

क्रोधमाहारयामास रावणस्य वधं प्रति। ततः किलकिलाशब्दं चक्रू राक्षसपुङ्गवाः।।21।।

krodhamāhārayāmāsa rāvaṇasya vadhaṃ prati /
tataḥ kilakilāśabdaṃ cakrū rākṣasapuṅgavāḥ //

Śrī Rāma became very furious with anger and prepared to slay Rāvaṇa. At this, the great demon chuckled derisively (21).

स राघवः पद्मपलाशलोचनो जज्वाल कोपेन द्विषज्जयेषणः।
रामं प्रहर्तु न शशाकमेदिनी चकम्पिरे वारिधयो ग्रहा अपि।। 22।।

sa rāghavaḥ padmapalāśalocano jajvāla kopena dviṣajjayeṣaṇaḥ /
rāmaṃ prahartu na śaśākamedinī cakampire vāridhayo grahā api //

Then when Śrī Rāma saw that Rāvaṇa was sneering, jeering and laughing sarcastically at him, taunting him scornfully as if it to show disdain, defiance and contempt for him, the lotus-eyed Rāghava lit up in furious anger with vehemence. He decided to finally kill the demon and obtain victory over him without delay. Meanwhile, Rāvaṇa tried every trick he knew, used every weapon he had in his possession, but failed to attack and injure Śrī Rāma. His failure to wound and subdue Śrī Rāma resulted in the earth, the ocean and planets to shake and tremble in fear (22).

[Note :—The reason why the earth shook and the ocean trembled in fear was that when Rāvaṇa had failed to hit Śrī Rāma inspite of his best efforts, he felt very disgusted and frustrated and he stamped his foot on the ground so hard in anger and dismay that the earth shook and this caused the water in the ocean to swirl, rise and dash against the various islands and mountains present in it. Huge waves rose high up in the air and crashed against each other and on the land. The scene resembled a vicious earthquake. The planets would naturally appear to move in the sky for an observer standing on the surface of the earth which was tossing and shaking violently under his legs. Another reason could have been that the earth and ocean were terrified of the prospect of Rāvaṇa venting his anger upon them in case he failed to subdue Śrī Rāma. The earth, the ocean and the planets feared for the worst to happen in the aftermath of the clash of these two Titans. See also canto 22, verse no. 6-8.]

Thus ends Canto 21 of the ancient epic called Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa written by sage Vālmīki describing how Rāvaṇa managed to disperse Śrī Rāma's army in a fraction of a moment, leaving only Śrī Rāma and Sītā in the battlefield.

* * *

Canto 22

Śrī Rāma faints after the fierce duel with Rāvaṇa

Finding himself all alone in the battlefield, Śrī Rāma became furious with anger and he decimated the remaining demon army single handedly, putting all his war expertise into play. Rāvaṇa stepped forward and challenged him for a one to one duel which was fought most ferociously between them. At last, Śrī Rāma used the so-called invincible arrow created by Brahmā, given by the latter to Indra who passed it on to sage Agastya who in turn had given it to Śrī Rāma to slay the 10-headed Rāvaṇa of Laṅkā. It was the most potent and powerful weapon of the time, just like we have nuclear missiles in today's time. Śrī Rāma used it as a last ditch attempt to kill the enemy, but such was the magnificence of Rāvaṇa's potential and strength that he grabbed it playfully with his left hand as if it was an ordinary dart, and not an invincible powerful arrow, and he snapped it into two. Utterly stunned and dismayed, Śrī Rāma felt crestfallen. In retribution, Rāvaṇa shot his own missile which pierced through the Lord's chest and vanished underground like a bolt of lightening. This did Śrī Rāma in, and he fell down unconscious. Rāvaṇa exulted, while the rest of the creation was full of consternation as if doomsday had finally arrived.

विनर्द्दतं रिपुं दृष्ट्वा रामः शत्रुनिबर्हणः। जज्वाल च स कोपेन रक्षसां सहजो रिपुः।।1।।

vinarddataṃ ripuṃ dṛṣṭvā rāmaḥ śatrunibarhaṇaḥ/
jajvāla ca sa kopena rakṣasāṃ sahajo ripuḥ//

When Śrī Rāma, who was renowned as a vanquisher of enemies and a natural enemy of the demons (representing evil, wicked, sinful and pervert forces of creation), saw his opponent thundering and roaring defiantly in the battlefield, he lit up furiously with wrath and anger (1).

विचकर्ष धनुः श्रेष्ठ प्रलयानलसन्निभम्। वेगेन बाणांश्चिक्षेप रक्षसां मर्मसु प्रभुः।।2।।
vicakarṣa dhanuḥ śreṣṭha pralayānalasannibham /
vegena bāṇāṃścikṣepa rakṣasāṃ marmasu prabhuḥ //

Pulling the string of his magnificent bow which appeared to spew the fierce fire appearing during the doomsday, the Lord rapidly pounded and peppered the sensitive and delicate parts of the body of demons with his swift and potent arrows shot in rapid-fire quick succession (2).

तिलशः खण्डयन्ति स्म बाणा राक्षसपुङ्गवान्। कदा धनुषि सन्धत्ते कदा विसृजति प्रभुः।।3।।
tilaśaḥ khaṇḍayanti sma bāṇā rākṣasapuṅgavān /
kadā dhanuṣi sandhatte kadā visṛjati prabhuḥ //

He cut and sliced through the great demons of Rāvaṇa's army rapidly with his swift arrows, cutting them to bits and pieces. The shooting was so quick, rapid and swift that no one could make out when Śrī Rāma mounted an arrow on the bow and when he shot it (3).

नान्तरं ददृशे कैश्चिच्छिन्नाः स्युररयः परम्। जघान राक्षसान्रामो रुद्रः पशुगणानिव।।4।।
nāntaraṃ dadṛśe kaiścicchinnāḥ syurarayaḥ param /
jaghāna rākṣasānrāmo rudraḥ paśugaṇāniva //

The enemy was getting quickly decimated and annihilated. Śrī Rāma slayed the demons just like Rudra (the furious form of Lord Śiva) sacrifices the animals (during the fire sacrifice) (4).

तद्दृष्ट्वा दुष्करं कर्म कृतं रामेण रावणः। अनीकाग्रं समासाद्य युयुधे राघवेण हि।।5।।
taddṛṣṭvā duṣkaraṃ karma kṛtaṃ rāmeṇa rāvaṇaḥ /
anīkāgraṃ samāsādya yuyudhe rāghaveṇa hi //

Seeing the stupendous and unprecedented deed of Śrī Rāma (of single handedly slaughtering the fierce and vicious demons as if shredding paper in a shredding machine), Rāvaṇa came out to the front line of the battlefield to personally take on and face Rāghava (Śrī Rāma) (5).

रे रे राक्षससेनान्यः प्रेक्षका इव तिष्ठत। अहमेको हनिष्यामि नरमाकस्मिकं रिपुम्।।6।।
re re rākṣasasenānyaḥ prekṣakā iva tiṣṭhata /
ahameko haniṣyāmi naramākasmikaṃ ripum //

He addressed his forces to rally behind him, 'Oh the demon soldiers of my army! Stand here and see! I will kill this uninvited human enemy, who has come suddenly and without any provocation whatsoever, single handedly all by myself. Just wait and watch! (6).

अद्य निर्मानवां पृथ्वीं निर्देवं त्रिदिवं तथा। करिष्याम्यहमेवैकः शोषयिष्यामि वारिधीन्॥7॥

adya nirmānavāṃ pṛthvīṃ nirdevaṃ tridivaṃ tathā/
kariṣyāmyahamevaikaḥ śoṣayiṣyāmi vāridhīn//

I shall free the earth of all humans today, I shall render the 3 worlds (nether, terrestrial and celestial) free of all Gods, and I shall dry up the ocean today single handedly, without any support or help of any kind (7).

पर्वतांश्चूर्णयिष्यामि पातयिष्यामि वै ग्रहान्। इत्युक्त्वा राक्षसश्रेष्ठो रामं योद्धुमथाह्वयत्॥8॥

parvatāṃścūrṇayiṣyāmi pātayiṣyāmi vai grahān/
ityuktvā rākṣasaśreṣṭho rāmaṃ yoddhumathāhvayat//

I shall crush the mountains and reduce them to dust and I shall make the planets fall from the sky'.

Seething with anger, that great demon challenged and invited Śrī Rāma for battle (duel) (8).

त्वामद्य खड्गेनाच्छिद्य तर्पयिष्यामि चानुगान्। नेयं लङ्कापुरी राम नाहञ्च दशकन्धरः॥9॥

tvāmadya khaḍgenācchidya tarpayiṣyāmi cānugān/
neyaṃ laṅkāpurī rāma nāhañca daśakandharaḥ//

Rāvaṇa ferociously sneered at Śrī Rāma, saying scornfully 'I shall pierce you with my sword and satisfy my soldiers. Oh Rāma! This is not Laṅkā, and I am not the 10-headed one whom you had managed to kill (and which deed of yours has made you so proud and overconfident about your strength and invincibility. It appears that that success has gone into your head. That is why you have unnecessarily attacked me without any provocation whatsoever and have thereby invited your own calamitous end)! (9).

[Note :—Rāvaṇa snubbed Śrī Rāma with this statement. In essence, he meant to say that Śrī Rāma felt very proud that he had managed to kill the 10-headed Rāvaṇa of Laṅkā, who was considered invincible in the world especially because of the boons that he had got from Brahmā, the creator, in battle, and thought that fighting and killing his elder brother, the 1000-headed Rāvaṇa, would be a cake walk for him, as it were. Even killing of the 10-headed Laṅkā king was possible only after a harrowing experience in which Lakṣmaṇa had got wounded and almost died and could only be revived because of the help from Hanumāna who had brought the life-saving herb, called Sañjīvanī, from the Himālayas. As for Rāvaṇa, Śrī Rāma had tried his best but failed to kill him on his own. It was the traitor Vibhīṣaṇa who should actually get the credit for his killing because it was he who had divulged the secret of his long life and invincibility to Śrī Rāma. This secret was the presence of pitcher of ambrosia in his heart (and according to some versions, in his navel) and it was only then that Śrī Rāma could manage to kill the 10-headed king of Laṅkā. Śrī Rāma should not be proud of his deeds, and he should not be so haughty as to unnecessarily and without any provocation launch a campaign against a Rāvaṇa who had not offended him in any manner like his younger sibling, the 10-headed Rāvaṇa, who had abducted Sītā from the forest. So, in the context of our present story, this thousand headed Rāvaṇa appears to tell Śrī Rāma that he would now 'teach him a lesson'!]

शिरस्ते पोथयिष्यामि गदया रघुनन्दन। कपित्थमिव काकुत्स्थ करी मदकलः किल।।10।।
śiraste pothayiṣyāmi gadayā raghunandana /
kapitthamiva kākutstha karī madakalaḥ kila //

Oh Raghunandana (Śrī Rāma)! I shall bash your head with my battle mace and it will fall down like a fruit called 'Kaintha' (the wood apple) falls down from an elephant, bashed and shattered' (10).

[Note :—The fruit of the wood apple tree is eaten whole by an elephant who puts it straight in his mouth, and after its contents are extracted inside the animal's intestine, the outer shell is excreted through the anus of the animal. Rāvaṇa alludes to this when he says that your head will fall down like the Kaintha fruit from the elephant.]

इत्युक्त्वा रावणो युद्धं रामेण सह चारभत्। तद्भूद्वैरथं युद्धं बलिवासवयोरिव।।11।।
ityuktvā rāvaṇo yuddhaṃ rāmeṇa saha cārabhat /
tadbhūdvairathaṃ yuddhaṃ balivāsavayoriva //

Saying this, Rāvaṇa commenced fighting a fierce and unrelenting duel with Śrī Rāma. The battle between the two of them resembled the ferocious duel that once took place between Vālī and Bāsava. Both of them (Śrī Rāma and Rāvaṇa) were on their respective war chariots (11).

रावणं प्राप्य रामोऽपि परं हर्षमुपागमत्। तदभूदद्भुतं युद्धं द्वयोर्वै रोमहर्षणम्।।12।।
rāvaṇaṃ prāpya rāmo'pi paraṃ harṣamupāgamat /
tadabhūdadbhutaṃ yuddhaṃ dvayorvai romaharṣaṇam //

Finding Rāvaṇa in an aggressive and angry mood in front of him, Śrī Rāma felt very happy (because he has now got an opportunity to settle a quick score with him without wasting time and energy in fighting the entire demon army). The two fought most valiantly and magnificently. The battle was most awe inspiring and amazing as well as blood cuddling and thrilling (12).

रामस्य च महाबाहोर्बलिनो रावणस्य च। गान्धर्वेण च गान्धर्व दैवं दैवेन राघवः ।।13।।

rāmasya ca mahābāhorbalino rāvaṇasya ca /
gāndharveṇa ca gāndharva daivaṃ daivena rāghavaḥ //

The battle between Śrī Rāma, who was most strong in arms and powerful, and Rāvaṇa, who was equally strong and valiant, raged on with the use of potent weapons of war known as 'Gāndharva and Daiva' (13).

[Note :—The weapons were named after the Gandharvas and the Gods who generally used them.]

अस्त्रं राक्षसराजस्य जघान परमास्त्रवित्। अस्त्रयुद्धे च परमो रावणो राक्षसाधिपः ।।14।।
ससर्ज परमक्रुद्धः पन्नगास्त्रं स राघवे। ते रावणधनुर्मुक्ताः शराः काञ्चनभूषिताः ।।15।।
अभ्यवर्षन्त काकुत्स्थं सर्पाभूत्वा महाविषाः। ते सर्पवदना घोरा वमन्तो ज्वलनं मुखैः ।।16।।

astraṃ rākṣasarājasya jaghāna paramāstravit /
astrayuddhe ca paramo rāvaṇo rākṣasādhipaḥ //
sasarja paramakruddhaḥ pannagāstraṃ sa rāghave /
te rāvaṇadhanurmuktāḥ śarāḥ kāñcanabhūṣitāḥ //
abhyavarṣanta kākutsthaṃ sarpābhūtvā mahāviṣāḥ /
te sarpavadanā ghorā vamanto jvalanaṃ mukhaiḥ //

Śrī Rāma, who was a great expert with weapons (and the art and skill of warfare) immediately destroyed or neutralised all the weapons, arms and armaments of the demon king Rāvaṇa. The latter was also most skilled and expert with the use of weapons in war (14), so he furiously used the formidable weapon known as 'Pannagāstra' upon Rāghava. These were gold plated specially empowered and energised arrows that converted themselves into very poisonous snakes as soon as they left Rāvaṇa's bow and they fell down upon Śrī Rāma in the form of serpents (and not arrows). These serpents were like dragons that spewed a fierce tongue of scorching fire from their mouths (15-16). [14-16]

रामममेवाभ्यवर्त्तन्त व्यादितास्या भयावहाः। तैर्वासुकिसमस्पर्शैर्दीप्तभोगैर्महाविषैः।।17।।

rāmamevābhyavarttanta vyāditāsyā bhayāvahāḥ /
tairvāsukisamasparśairdīptabhogairmahāviṣaiḥ //

Those most horrifying and abominable dragons who resembled the python named Vāsuki in their majestic and magnificently radiant bodies and formidable poisonous breath, opened their mouths wide and lunged forward at Śrī Rāma (17).

[Note :—'Vāsuki' was the legendary python that was used in the form of a rope by the demons and the Gods during the legendry churning of the ocean in search of Amṛta, the ambrosia of eternity and bliss.]

दिशश्च विदिशश्चैव समन्तादावृता भृशम्। रामः सम्पततो दृष्ट्वा पन्नगांस्तान्सहस्रशः।।18।।

diśaśca vidiśaścaiva samantādāvṛtā bhṛśam /
rāmaḥ sampatato dṛṣṭvā pannagāṃstānsahasraśaḥ //

Śrī Rāma observed that all the direction of the sky have been covered by those thousands of vicious snakes who were swiftly moving towards him (like a big shroud or a latticed sheet of snakes ready to land on him from the sky and pin him down to the ground) to attack him from all the sides at once (18).

सौपर्णमस्त्रं तद्घोरं पुनः प्रावर्तयद्रणे। रामेण च शरा मुक्ता रुक्मपुङ्खाः शिलाशिताः।।19।।
सुपर्णाः काञ्चना भूत्वा विचेरुः सर्पशत्रवः। ते ताञ्छत्रुशराञ्जघ्नुः सर्परूपान्महाविषान्।।20।।

sauparṇamastraṃ tadghoraṃ punaḥ prāvartayadraṇe /
rāmeṇa ca śarā muktā rukmapuṅkhāḥ śilāśitāḥ //
suparṇāḥ kāñcanā bhūtvā viceruḥ sarpaśatravaḥ /
te tāñchatruśarāñjaghnuḥ sarparūpānmahāviṣān //

He immediately invoked the most potent and formidable antidote to such a weapon, called 'Garuḍāstra' (or the weapon which immediately transformed itself into the eagle or heron called Garuḍa) which devoured all the snakes created by the Pannagāstra shot by Rāvaṇa in the battlefield.

The arrows of Śrī Rāma had golden tailfins; they were sharpened by rubbing them against a rock face (to make them razor sharp) (19). Those arrows metamorphosed into golden Garuḍas (eagle or heron) who are deemed to be natural enemies of serpents. These birds of prey flew everywhere in all the directions and pounced upon those dragons from all the sides. They started to neutralise and destroy those most ferocious arrows of the enemy which had converted themselves into poisonous snakes (20). [19-20]

[Note :—Obviously, technology used today by modern armies to counter incoming missiles, in the form of 'anti-missile defense shield', was also known at that time. The arrows shot by Rāvaṇa which converted themselves into snakes were equivalent to the incoming missile, while the arrows shot by Śrī Rāma which converted into the Garuḍa were like the anti-missiles launched to counter those incoming missiles launched by the enemy.]

सुपर्णरूपा रामस्य विशिखाः कामरूपिणः। अस्त्रे प्रतिहते क्रुद्धो रावणो राक्षसाधिपः ।।21।।

suparṇarūpā rāmasya viśikhāḥ kāmarūpiṇaḥ /
astre pratihate kruddho rāvaṇo rākṣasādhipaḥ //

Observing that Śrī Rāma's potent and formidable arrows, which were golden and magical, were swiftly countering and decimating his own arrows, the evil king of demons, Rāvaṇa, became furious with anger (21).

अभ्यवर्षत्तदा रामं घोराभिश्चाश्मवृष्टिभिः। ततः शरसहस्त्रेण पुनरक्लिष्टकारिणम् ।।22।।

abhyavarṣattadā rāmaṃ ghorābhiścāśmavṛṣṭibhiḥ /
tataḥ śarasahasreṇa punarakliṣṭakāriṇam //

Then he (Rāvaṇa) showered a heavy torrent of stones, rocks and boulders upon Śrī Rāma (in order to crush him under them). After that, he peppered the Lord with thousands of formidable arrows once again (22).

रामबाणानभ्यहनद्घोराभिः शरवृष्टिभिः। विषेदुर्देवगन्धर्वाश्चारणाः पितरस्तथा ।।23।।

rāmabāṇānabhyahanadghorābhiḥ śaravṛṣṭibhiḥ /
viṣedurdevagandharvāścāraṇāḥ pitarastathā //

The arrows shot by him (Rāvaṇa), which rained down upon Śrī Rāma from all the sides, swiftly started to neutralise and destroy his (Śrī Rāma's) arrows. The Gods, Gandharvas, Cāraṇas and Pitaras were anguished and dismayed at this development (23).

[Note :—The Gandharvas and Cāraṇas are semi-Gods who are celestial musicians and bards/minstrels respectively, while the Pitaras are spirits of dead ancestors.]

राममार्तं तदा दृष्ट्वा सिद्धाश्च परमर्षयः। राचन्द्रमसं दृष्ट्वा ग्रस्तं रावण राहुणा ।।24।।

rāmamārtaṃ tadā dṛṣṭvā siddhāśca paramarṣayaḥ /
rācandramasaṃ dṛṣṭvā grastaṃ rāvaṇa rāhuṇā //

Observing that Śrī Rāma was agitated, desperate and distressed, the various Siddhas (mystics) and great sages and seers felt as if the moon representing Śrī Rāma was being devoured (or eclipsed) by Rāhu representing Rāvaṇa (24).

[Note :—According to legend, a demon disguised himself as a God and sat down in their row when Viṣṇu was distributing the ambrosia of eternity, obtained by churning of the ocean, to the Gods. That demon managed to have a sip before his deceit was caught. Then Viṣṇu cut off his throat with his discus, the severed head becoming Rāhu and the torso becoming Ketu. He was betrayed by the sun and the moon Gods who were sitting on his either sides; so he got a boon that he would gobble up both of them at regular intervals to quench his hunger. But since his neck was cut off, these two, the sun and the moon, after having entered his gaping mouth, emerged from the lower end of his severed head. According to mythology, this causes the two lunar and solar eclipses. Meanwhile, the torso which became Ketu metamorphosed into the cosmic comet with a long tail. Since they are the tormentors of Gods, the appearances of Rāhu and Ketu are considered inauspicious occurrence.]

प्राजापत्यं च नक्षत्रं रोहिणीं शशिनः प्रियाम्। समाक्रम्य बुधस्तस्थौ प्रजाना माहते रतः।।25।।

prājāpatyaṃ ca nakṣatraṃ rohiṇīṃ śaśinaḥ priyām /
samākramya budhastasthau prajānā māhate rataḥ //

At that horrifying moment, the planet mercury, which is the patron planet or star for Prajāpati (i.e. Brahmā, the creator; literally meaning the master or the Lord who sustains his subjects), attacked Rohiṇī who is the dear wife of the Moon-God. This particular configuration of stars portends evil for the subjects of Prajāpati (i.e. it precipitates calamitous events) (25).

[Note :—When the Moon-God was devoured by Rāhu, the planet Mercury got an opportunity and it lustfully pounced upon his consort Rohiṇī! Such promiscuous behaviour amongst Gods is very ominous for the mortals and it is a harbinger of moral turpitude. With morality lost, nothing called civilisation, nobility, virtuousness and righteousness would survive. This is why Prajāpati has been especially mentioned here, just to emphasise the point that with all his remarkable feats in creating this vast universe and laying down all the codes of conduct for its regulation, including the Vedas which inculcate wisdom and enlightenment as well as spiritual knowledge in all the creatures, he had failed to leash in the lurking Frankenstein monster that he had himself created in the form of passions, lust, lasciviousness and promiscuity; Prajāpati could not even control his own star Mercury from being sexually pervert and pouncing upon the wife of one of his own compatriots, the Moon-God, when he is in utter distress, being devoured by Rāhu. Ordinarily it would have been expected of Mercury, who was the patron star of Prajāpati, to give protection to Rohiṇī instead of eyeing her with lust. We must know that the author of this epic, sage Vālmīki, was no ordinary writer. With this single verse, he has expressed his anguish at the fall of standard of morality and ethics in the society, no matter what attempt is made to regulate it, leash it and enlighten the population about its ill effects. Vālmīki did not wish to gloss over this aspect.]

सधूमः वरिवृत्तोर्मिः प्रज्वलन्निव सागरः। उत्पपात ततः क्रुद्धः स्पृशन्निव दिवाकरम्।।26।।
sadhūmaḥ varivṛttormiḥ prajvalanniva sāgaraḥ /
utpapāta tataḥ kruddhaḥ spṛśanniva divākaram //

The ocean boiled and steam came out from it. Then Rāvaṇa leapt up angrily as if attempting to touch the sun (26).

नष्टरूपश्च पुरुषो मन्दरश्मिर्दिवाकरः। अदृश्यत कबन्धांकः समेतो धूमकेतुना।।27।।
naṣṭarūpaśca puruṣo mandaraśmirdivākaraḥ /
adṛśyata kabandhāṃkaḥ sameto dhūmaketunā //

The sun lost its glory, majesty, splendour and radiance like a spent force or burnt out fire. Its rays became dull and lost their dazzle and shine and brightness. 'Kabandhas' (the severed heads; meteors) and 'Dhūmaketus' (comets) appeared in the sky (as bad omens and a sign of some calamitous event) (27).

ऋक्षाश्चखरनिर्घोषा गगने पुरुषाधमाः। औत्पातिकानि नर्दन्तः समन्तात्परिचक्रमुः।।28।।
ṛkṣāścakharanirghoṣā gagane puruṣādhamāḥ /
autpātikāni nardantaḥ samantātparicakramuḥ //

The stars and planets in the sky felt the effect of the turmoil on the earth; the cacophonous tumult echoed from them, and there apparently seemed to be a violent noise emanating from the sky itself (as if the planets and the stars were having a severe earthquake and were about to break up). Violent disturbances, horrifying and chilling shrieks and terrifying turbulence was discernible in every direction of the compass (28).

रामोऽपि बद्ध्वा भ्रुकुटिं क्रोधसंरक्तलोचनः। क्रोधं चकार सुभृशं निर्द्दहन्निव राक्षसम्।।29।।
rāmo'pi baddhvā bhrukuṭiṃ krodhasaṃraktalocanaḥ /
krodhaṃ cakāra subhṛśaṃ nirddahanniva rākṣasam //

Śrī Rāma's eyebrows cocked up and his eyes glowed red in ire, vehemence and anger. It appeared that he would burn the demons to cinders with his shrill anger and ferocious wrath (29).

तस्य क्रुद्धस्य वदनं दृष्ट्वा रामस्य धीमतः। सर्वभूतानि वित्रेषुः प्राकम्पत मही तदा।।30।।

tasya kruddhasya vadanaṃ dṛṣṭvā rāmasya dhīmataḥ /
sarvabhūtāni vitreṣuḥ prākampata mahī tadā //

Seeing the ferocious countenance of Śrī Rāma's face who was, however, wise, erudite, sagacious, adroit and enlightened, all the elements in creation became very distressed and terrified, and the earth shook and shivered (30).

[Note :—The elements were afraid and terrified and the earth shook because Śrī Rāma, who was a personification of the Supreme Being, was not expected to loose his temper at anyone. Seeing him distressed and furious with anger, which was a very unexpected event, the creatures of the world became very annoyed and frightened because they felt that something very dangerous and fearful was about to happen, an event which would be disastrous for the entire creation.]

सिंहशार्दूलमाञ्छैलः प्रजज्वालाकुलद्रुमः। बभूव चातिक्षुभितः समुद्र इव पर्वसु।।31।।

siṃhaśārdūlamāñchailaḥ prajajvālākuladrumaḥ /
babhūva cātikṣubhitaḥ samudra iva parvasu //

All the trees and forests as well as the lions and the tigers residing on mountains were scorched as the mountains caught fire. The scenario on the mountains resembled the one present inside the agitated ocean that is been churned violently and boils over during the dooms day (31).

लङ्कायां रावणवधे यं प्रायुक्तं शरं प्रभुः। जग्राह तं शरं दीप्तं निःसन्तमिवोरगम्।।32।।

laṅkāyāṃ rāvaṇavadhe yaṃ prāyuktaṃ śaraṃ prabhuḥ /
jagrāha taṃ śaraṃ dīptaṃ niḥsantamivoragam //

The arrow that the Lord Śrī Rāma had used to slay the 10-headed Rāvaṇa in Laṅkā, he took up the same gloriously radiant and most potent arrow resembling a viciously hissing dragon (in his hand and mounted it on his bow) (32).

यमस्मै प्रथमं प्रादादगस्त्यो भगवानृषिः। ब्रह्मदत्तं महाबाणं यमाह युधि तद्वधे।।33।।

yamasmai prathamaṃ prādādagastyo bhagavānṛṣiḥ /
brahmadattaṃ mahābāṇaṃ yamāha yudhi tadvadhe //

That arrow was given to the Lord by sage Agastya on one earlier occasion. He (Śrī Rāma) picked up that great and potent arrow given to him by that Brāhmin (sage Agastya) for use in this battle (33).

ब्रह्मणा निर्मितं पूर्णमिन्द्राद्यामिततेजसा। दत्तं सुरपतेः पूर्वं त्रैलोक्यजयकांक्षिणः।।34।।

brahmaṇā nirmitaṃ pūrṇamindrādyāmitatejasā /
dattaṃ surapateḥ pūrvaṃ trailokyajayakāṃkṣiṇaḥ //

The arrow was made or created by Brahmā, the creator, himself, and Indra and other Gods had blessed it or empowered it with special energy, strength and potentials. Previously, it was given to Indra (by Brahmā) so that he could conquer the three worlds (celestial, terrestrial, subterranean or nether worlds) in order to become king of the universe (34).

यस्य वाजेषु पवनः गले पावकभास्करौ। शरीरमाकाशमयं गौरवे मेरुमन्दरौ।।35।।
पर्वस्वपि च विन्यस्ता लोकपाला महौजसः। धनदो वरुणश्चैव पाशहस्तस्थान्तकः।।36।।

yasya vājeṣu pavanaḥ gale pāvakabhāskarau /
śarīramākāśamayaṃ gaurave merumandarau //
parvasvapi ca vinyastā lokapālā mahaujasaḥ /
dhanado varuṇaścaiva pāśahastasthāntakaḥ //

That most astounding and invincible arrow was stupendous in its powers, potentials and prowess. It had the swift Wind-God mounted on its tail-end, the fierce Fire-God and scorching Sun-God on its tip. Its shaft was so vast and seemingly endless as the sky, and its majesty was like that of the legendary mountains Meru and Mandrācala (which are the two loftiest mountains in mythology) (35).

All the soldered joints on it had one or the other Gods mounted (present) on them—such as the famous Lokapālas (the guardians of the various corners of the world), the Lord of wealth (Kubera), Varuṇa (the Water-God) and Yama (the God of death) with his thick baton (36). [35-36]

जाज्वल्यमानं वपुषा सपुंखं हेमभूषितम्। तेजसा सर्वभूतानां कृतं भास्करवर्चसा।।37।।

jājvalyamānaṃ vapuṣā sapuṃkhaṃ hemabhūṣitam /
tejasā sarvabhūtānāṃ kṛtaṃ bhāskaravarcasā //

That arrow was shining and gleaming very brightly, its tailfins were golden in colour, its radiance and splendour were comparable to the sun, and it was superior to all that was present in the mortal creation (in the form of a weapon) (37).

सधूममिव कालाग्नि दीप्यमानं रविं यथा। रथनागाश्ववृन्दानां भेदनं क्षिप्रकारिणम्।।38।।

sadhūmamiva kālāgni dīpyamānaṃ raviṃ yathā /
rathanāgāśvavṛndānāṃ bhedanaṃ kṣiprakāriṇam //

It resembled the doomsday fire giving out a thick plume of smoke and the sun in its brightness and shine. It could swiftly pierce (drill) through war chariots and as swiftly slay war horses (38).

परिघाणां सहस्त्राणां गिरीणां चैव भेदनम्। नानारुधिरसिक्ताङ्गं मेदोदिग्धं सुदारुणम्।।39।।

parighāṇāṃ sahasrāṇāṃ girīṇāṃ caiva bhedanam /
nānārudhirasiktāṅgaṃ medodigdhaṃ sudāruṇam //

It had the stupendous, magnificent and fascinating powers to drill through or pierce through thousands of layer of armour as well as through huge mountains. It was soaked with blood of different categories and was thickly coated with flesh. It was most terrible, most horrible, most horrifying, most formidable, most potent, most powerful and most fierce arrow that was ever created (39).

[Note :—'Different type of blood' in the text indicates that it had been used to kill different types of sinful and evil creatures, or that it had the potentials to slay creatures of different types of blood and blood groups, i.e. animals, humans, demons, reptiles, birds etc. including those creatures who are cold blooded and those who are warm blooded. The same meaning applies to it being symbolically covered with flesh.]

कालाभं सुमहानादं नानाशक्तिविनाशनम्। शत्रूणां त्रासजननं सुपर्णमिव पन्नगम्।।40।।

kālābhaṃ sumahānādaṃ nānāśaktivināśanam /
śatrūṇāṃ trāsajananaṃ suparṇamiva pannagam //

It resembled 'death' personified. Its explosive and violent sound could render other powers ineffective. It tormented and terrified the enemies out of their wits, and it was like a fierce fire-spewing dragon with a long tail with a sharp tailfin (40).

[Note :—This particular verse reminds one of a supersonic cruise missile. Indeed, the very thought of a cruise missile going past will wrench the guts out of even a hardened of war veteran. It is easy to imagine what that arrow must have been like and how it must have sounded as it cruised towards its target from the point of view of a modern man who has witnessed the modern-day warfare using high technology weapons.

Missiles have been used to drill through rock-solid mountains and pierce through solid concrete bunkers to explode inside, shattering to smithereens huge slabs of stones and concrete as if they were nine pins or paper cards shredded to pieces. See also verse no. 44 below.]

काकगृध्रवकानां च गोमायुवृकरक्षसाम्। नित्यं भक्ष्यप्रदं युद्धे राक्षसानां भयावहम्।।41।।
kākagṛdhravakānāṃ ca gomāyuvṛkarakṣasām /
nityaṃ bhakṣyapradaṃ yuddhe rākṣasānāṃ bhayāvaham //

Having the potentials to regularly devour (i.e. overcome and kill) such birds and animals of prey such as crows, vultures, herons and jackals as well as the soldier-class called Vṛka (or Kṣatriyas who do not shy away from killing and spilling blood during war) and the demons who are flesh eaters and most cruel, that arrow unleashed terror amongst the rank and file of the demon army in the battlefield (41).

द्विषतां कीर्तिहरणं प्रकर्षकरमात्मनः। अभिमन्त्र्य ततो रामस्तं महेषुं महाभुजः।।42।।
dviṣatāṃ kīrtiharaṇaṃ prakarṣakaramātmanaḥ /
abhimantrya tato rāmastaṃ maheṣuṃ mahābhujaḥ //

It could decimate and annihilate (literally 'steal') the fame and glory pertaining to the powers, prowess, potent, strength, valour and majesty of an enemy (opponent). Śrī Rāma, who was strong and powerful in arms, invoked Lord Śiva and activated that arrow for obtaining an upper hand for himself in the raging battle (42).

वेदप्रोक्तेन विधिना कुण्डलीकृत्य कार्मुकम्। स रावणाय तं वेगाच्चिक्षेप शरमुत्तमम्।।43।।
vedaproktena vidhinā kuṇḍalīkṛtya kārmukam /
sa rāvaṇāya taṃ vegāccikṣepa śaramuttamam //

He mounted that excellent arrow on his bow in accordance with the guidelines laid down in the Vedas for this purpose, and then shot it at Rāvaṇa (43).

[Note :—The 'Veda' referred here is not one of the well known Vedas called Ṛg, Sāma, Yajur and Atharva. It is a sub-Veda known as 'Dhanur Veda' which is a Upa-Veda. It deals with the science and skill of using the bow and the arrow as well as the science of warfare known as military science in modern terms; its main text is the Agni Purāṇa. There are four'Upa-Vedas', the other three are the following—(i) Ayurveda—which deals with herbals medicines and diseases (known as medical science in modern parlance), (ii) Artha Śāstra—which deals with economics and political science, and (iii) Gandharva Veda—which deals with literature, poetry, theatre, magic, music, dance etc.]

स सायको धनुर्मुक्तो हन्तुं रामेण रावणम्। धूमपूर्वं प्रजज्वाल प्राप्य वायुपथं महान्।।44।।

sa sāyako dhanurmukto hantuṃ rāmeṇa rāvaṇam /
dhūmapūrvaṃ prajajvāla prāpya vāyupathaṃ mahān //

That formidable arrow shot by Śrī Rāma from his bow with the express purpose of killing Rāvaṇa, first emitted fumes (like a missile or rocket giving out exhaust gases from its hind part) and then lit up, spewing flames—much like the pillar of orange and yellow plume of flame that accompanies a rocket during its launch. It then became airborne and moved menacingly towards its target (Rāvaṇa) (44).

[Note :—See note of verse no. 40 in this context.]

तं वज्रमिव दुर्धर्षं वज्रपाणिविसर्जितम्। कृतान्तकमिवावार्य रावणो वीक्ष्य तत्पुरः।।45।।
हुंकृत्य किल जग्राह बाणं वामेन पाणिना। ततस्तं जानुनाकृष्य बभञ्ज राक्षासाधिपः।।46।।

taṃ vajramiva durdharṣaṃ vajrapāṇivisarjitam /
kṛtāntakamivāvārya rāvaṇo vīkṣya tatpuraḥ //
huṃkṛtya kila jagrāha bāṇaṃ vāmena pāṇinā /
tatastaṃ jānunākṛṣya babhañja rākṣasādhipaḥ //

When Rāvaṇa saw that arrow resembling the formidable Vajra, the thunderbolt thrown by Indra, and his impending death which cannot be prevented, coming at him menacingly (45), he let out a shrill cry and roared loudly. Catching the arrow disdainfully and contemptuously with his left hand, the great and evil king of demons broke that arrow into two by bending it against his thighs (46). [45-46].

[Note :—This verse should remind us of what Sītā had told the sages in Canto 17, verse no. 19 and Canto 18, verse no. 5-6 that Śrī Rāma's victory over the 10-headed Rāvaṇa of Laṅkā was not worthy of so much glorification; the real glory would be when the Lord defeats the thousands headed elder brother of that Rāvaṇa. This is also what this Rāvaṇa meant when he taunted and snubbed Śrī Rāma in verse no. 9 of this Canto.

It must be noted that sage Vālmīki had devoted 13 verses of this Canto (verse nos. 32-44) to describe the uniqueness and the stupendous powers and potentials of this particular arrow which Rāma had used to shoot and kill the 10-headed Rāvaṇa and had again used it to kill this 1000-headed Rāvaṇa because he thought that it was the ultimate weapon which can be used for this purpose and which will be unfailing in its objective. Then the sage culminates it with only one single verse (verse no. 46) to say how Rāvaṇa caught hold of it and broke it by hitting it against his thighs. The contempt with which Rāvaṇa had caught hold of this arrow is emphasised by the fact that he had used his left hand, instead of the right hand to do so. The sage wished to emphasis the point that such a magnificent weapon—and that too shot after properly invoking the Mantras of the Vedas (verse no. 42-43)—was nothing more than a straw for Rāvaṇa as he could easily break it up. This subtle allusion to the expertise at weapons as well as the power and strength of Rāvaṇa to be of a far superior category to that of Śrī Rāma is very evident here, and is further bolstered in the next few verses of this Canto when Śrī Rāma could not stand up to even one single arrow shot by Rāvaṇa in retaliation, and he falls down unconscious.

The next Canto no. 23 would describe the killing of this Rāvaṇa by Sītā who would transform herself as the great Goddess of death known as Mahākālī. It lays stress on the fact that the general perception of Sītā being meek and humble throughout the story of the Rāmāyaṇa as narrated by the major versions of the story, including that of Vālmīki's other epic 'Rāmāyaṇa' itself, is not the whole and complete truthful picture. In a society dominated by males, the strength of the female was undermined. It was to set the records straight that Vālmīki decided to pen this sequel to his main epic, the Rāmāyaṇa, and that is why he has laid so much emphasis in showing Śrī Rāma's vulnerability vis-à-vis the invincibility, potentials, strength, powers and prowess of Sītā.]

भग्ने तस्मिञ्छरे रामो विमना इव तस्थिवान्। सहस्रकन्धरः क्रुद्धः क्षुरम्प्रगृह्य सायकम्।।47।।
वव्याध राघवं वक्षः सर्वप्राणेन राक्षसः।। 47½।।

bhagne tasmiñchare rāmo vimanā iva tasthivān/
sahasrakandharaḥ kruddhaḥ kṣurampragṛhya sāyakam//
vavyādha rāghavaṃ vakṣaḥ sarvaprāṇena rākṣasaḥ/

When that arrow was broken by Rāvaṇa like it was straw, Śrī Rāma felt very dismayed, hopeless, hapless, crestfallen and discouraged. The thousand necked (headed) Rāvaṇa became delirious and extremely furious. He took a very sharp and potent arrow (47) and the demon then shot it with all the might he had. That arrow slammed into the chest of Rāghava (Śrī Rāma) and pierced through it (47½). [47-47½]

वक्षो निर्भिद्य स शरो रामस्य सुमहात्मनः।।48।।
भित्त्वा महीं च सहसा पाताल तलमाविशत्। ततो रामो महाबाहुः पपात पुष्पकोपरि।।49।।

vakṣo nirbhidya sa śaro rāmasya sumahātmanaḥ//
bhittvā mahīṃ ca sahasā pātāla talamāviśat/
tato rāmo mahābāhuḥ papāta puṣpakopari//

That arrow pierced through the chest of the great and righteous Śrī Rāma (48), drilled through the earth (after escaping from his body) and quickly went to the nether world called Pātāla. At this, Śrī Rāma, who was most strong in arms, fell down unconscious on the Puṣpaka chariot-cum-plane (49). [48-49]

निःसंज्ञो निश्चलश्चासीद्धाहा भूतानि चक्रिरे। प्राकम्पत मही सर्वा सपर्वतवनाब्धिका।
ऋषयः कान्दिशीकास्ते हा राम इति वादिनः।। 50।।

niḥsaṃjño niścalaścāsīddhāhā bhūtāni cakrire/
prākampata mahī sarvā saparvatavanābdhikā/
ṛṣayaḥ kāndiśīkāste hā rāma iti vādinaḥ//

He (Śrī Rāma) became unconscious and laid absolutely still. At this sight, all the creatures raised a tumultuous cry of alarm and utter dismay and distress. There was widespread lamentation and consternation everywhere. The earth shook along with its mountains and forests. All the sages and seers grieved and lamented, exclaiming woefully, 'Ah Rāma!' (50).

दशशतवदनो जितारिरुग्रोरणशिरसि प्रननर्त सानुयात्रः।
गगनतलगता निपेतुरुल्काः प्रलयमिवापि च मेनिरे जनौघाः।।51।।

daśaśatavadano jitārirugroraṇaśirasi prananarta sānuyātraḥ/
gaganatalagatā nipeturulkāḥ pralayamivāpi ca menire janaughāḥ//

The thousand headed one (Rāvaṇa) who was renowned as a vanquisher of his enemies in any war, began dancing ecstatically in the battlefield. Meteors began falling from the sky and all the creatures thought that it would now be the end of the world (51).

Thus ends Canto 22 of the ancient epic called Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa written by sage Vālmīki describing the hand to hand duel between Śrī Rāma and Rāvaṇa which ultimately led to Śrī Rāma getting wounded and falling down unconscious during the battle.

* * *

Canto 23

Sītā enters war and assuming the ferocious form of Mahākālī, the great Goddess of death, she finally kills Rāvaṇa

Seeing that Śrī Rāma was mortally wounded and lying unconscious on the chariot, Sītā revealed her true form as the cosmic power call 'Śakti' in front of which nothing can stand. She assumed an awe inspiring, chillingly ferocious and extremely terrifying form of 'Mahākālī', literally the great Goddess of death, destruction and annihilation, and replicated a doomsday scenario in the battlefield. The entire demon army along with their thousand headed king Rāvaṇa were killed in a short time. Meanwhile, thousands of horrifying she-spirits of war appeared from each hair on Mahākālī's body, and these terrifyingly ghastly spirits played ball using the severed heads of the demons lying scattered everywhere in the bloody slush of the battlefield. Her vehement wrath, anger and retribution broke all boundaries, and the entire world was on the verge of being annihilated. The sages, seers and Gods were extremely alarmed and they prayed to her to calm down.

This Canto stands out in the sense that it presents a very vivid picture of the chilling events of the battlefield and how the ferocious and bloodthirsty form of the Goddess danced the dance of doomsday with no holds barred. It also lists the name of all the she-spirits and female ogres, phantoms and ghosts that appeared there, their bone chilling cries and most terrifying countenance, their playing with the severed heads of the demon warriors, and the different birds and animals of prey having a field day, feeding upon and running away with dead bodies. Sītā, in brief, accomplished in a fraction of a moment what Śrī Rāma and his entire army could not during the entire war which preceded Śrī Rāma's fainting. Vālmīki, it appears, has made up for one regret that had been constantly gnawing at his heart when he wrote his other well known epic, the Rāmāyaṇa, and that regret was that in that story, Sītā was depicted to be always as the receiving end of sorrows and miseries, appearing to be weak humble and meek, cowering and weeping and at the mercy of others. In this Canto, Vālmīki has wiped out that one single regret or burden that he had upon his heart, and it was to show that Sītā was not meek and weak but extremely powerful, potent, valiant, effective and strong as she should have been, being the manifestation of the cosmic divine power called Śakti, that she indeed was. The humbleness and simplicity that were the hallmarks of Sītā was because she did not wish to subject her husband to appear to be junior to her in any respect; that would be most impolite and untraditional and unbecoming on her part. But inside her heart, she wished the world to know the facts—so that is why she smirked at and snubbed the sages when they were honouring Śrī Rāma upon his return after slaying the 10-headed Rāvaṇa of Laṅkā, and also when Śrī Rāma fell down unconscious on the chariot after being hit by the thousand headed Rāvaṇa's arrow. She appears to be subtly saying, 'Well, so much for all the glories heaped upon the Lord by the sages and the Gods! He could not bear even one single arrow directed at him by Rāvaṇa. Wait, oh sages and Gods, I'll show you who I am!' And then of course, all hell broke loose, at it were.

रामं तथाविधं दृष्ट्वा मुनयो भयविह्वलाः। हाहाकारं प्रकुर्वतः शान्ति जेपुश्च केचन।।1।।

rāmaṃ tathāvidhaṃ dṛṣṭvā munayo bhayavihvalāḥ /
hāhākāraṃ prakurvataḥ śānti jepuśca kecana //

Seeing this pathetic decapitated condition of Śrī Rāma (lying wounded and unconscious on the chariot in the battlefield), the sages and seers became very nervous, anxious and terrified out of fear. They lamented and grieved; some of them invoked divine intervention to calm down (alleviate) the evil happenings with incantation of Mantras to restore peace everywhere (1).

तदा तु मुनिभिर्दृष्ट्वा सीता प्रहसितानना। वसिष्ठप्रमुखाः सर्वे सीतां प्रोचुर्महर्षयः।।2।।

tadā tu munirbhirdṛṣṭvā sītā prahasitānanā /
vasiṣṭhapramukhāḥ sarve sītāṃ procurmaharṣayaḥ //

Observing the scornful sneer and smirk on the face of Sītā (indicating her indignation and mirth) the sages, Vasiṣṭha being the chief amongst them, said to her—(2).

[Note :—This sarcastic smile resembled the one she had borne when the sages were glorifying Śrī Rāma in Canto 17, verse no. 18-19.]

सीते कथं श्रावितोऽयं रावणं राघवस्त्वया। समुत्पन्नो विपाकोऽयं घोरो जनकनन्दिनि।।3।।
क्व गता भ्रातरः सर्वे क्व गता वानरर्षभा। मन्त्रिणः क्व गता भद्रे रामस्य किमुपस्थितम्।।4।।

sīte kathaṃ śrāvito'yaṃ rāvaṇaṃ rāghavastvayā /
samutpanno vipāko'yaṃ ghoro janakanandini //
kva gatā bhrātaraḥ sarve kva gatā vānararṣabhā /
mantriṇaḥ kva gatā bhadre rāmasya kimupasthitam //

'Oh Sītā! Why did you tell this story of the 1000-headed Rāvaṇa to Rāghava (Śrī Rāma)? [See Canto 17.] Oh the daughter of Janaka (Jānakī)! This horrendous consequence is the result of it (3). No one knows where all the brothers (of Śrī Rāma) and the monkeys (i.e. the rest of the army of Śrī Rāma) has gone? Oh gentle lady! Where have all the ministers gone? What has happened to Śrī Rāma?' (4). [3-4]

श्रुत्वैतद्वचनं तेषां मुनीनां भावितात्मनाम्। रामं तथाविधं दृष्ट्वा शयानं पुष्पकोपरि।।5।।
पुण्डरीकनिभे नेत्रे निमील्य रणमूर्द्धति। आलिंग्य चोरसा सुप्तं प्रियामिव धनुः शरम्।।6।।

śrutvaitadvacanaṃ teṣāṃ munīnāṃ bhāvitātmanām /
rāmaṃ tathāvidhaṃ dṛṣṭvā śayānaṃ puṣpakopari //
puṇḍarīkanibhe netre nimīlya raṇamūrddhati /
āliṃgya corasā suptaṃ priyāmiva dhanuḥ śaram //

Hearing these words of stunned astonishment and utter dismay from the sages and observing that Śrī Rāma was lying unconscious on the Puṣpaka chariot-cum-plane, still holding his bow and arrow in his hands and appearing to be fast asleep in the battlefield with his lotus-like eyes closed shut, she embraced her unconscious husband (5-6).

नर्दन्तं राक्षसं चापि महाबलपराक्रमम्। साट्टहासं विनद्योच्चैः सीता जनकनन्दिनी।।7।।

nardantaṃ rākṣasaṃ cāpi mahābalaparākramam /
sāṭṭahāsaṃ vinadyoccaiḥ sītā janakanandinī //

Finding that the demon (Rāvaṇa) was cheering, jeering and rejoicing loudly at his stupendous feat showcasing his matchless and great powers, potentials, strength, valour and punch, the daughter of Janaka (Sītā) laughed derisively with a shrill, bone chilling tone (7).

स्वरूपं प्रजहौ देवी महाविकटरूपिणी। क्षुत्क्षामा कोटराक्षी चक्रभ्रमितलोचना।।8।।

svarūpaṃ prajahau devī mahāvikaṭarūpiṇī /
kṣutkṣāmā koṭarākṣī cakrabhramitalocanā //

The Goddess abandoned her previous calm, docile and sober form (as a human queen of Ayodhyā) and metamorphosed into a most ferocious, formidable and abominable form. She resembled a hungry female ogre or a vampire having widely roving eyes (8).

दीर्घजङ्घा महारावा मुण्डमालाविभूषणा। अस्थिकिङ्किणिका भीमा भीमवेगपराक्रमा।।9।।
dīrghajaṅghā mahārāvā muṇḍamālāvibhūṣaṇā /
asthikiṅkiṇikā bhīmā bhīmavegaparākramā //

Her form had huge thighs and a violent voice; it was adorned by a garland of skulls and bracelets of bones; it was colossus and most formidable; it was most invincible, valiant, strong and robust; it was most swift, active and agile; and it was very powerful, potent, majestic and stupendous (9).

खरस्वरा महाघोरा विकृता विकृतानना। चतुर्भुजा दीर्घतुण्डा शिरोऽलङ्करणोज्ज्वला।।10।।
kharasvarā mahāghorā vikṛtā vikṛtānanā /
caturbhujā dīrghatuṇḍā śiro'laṅkaraṇojjvalā //

She had a sharp, shrill and high toned voice, was most formidable, potent, fierce and horrying, was terrifying and abominable with a horrible, scowling, terrorising, bone chilling and hair raising fearful visage, and had four arms and a large face. She wore ornaments and other decorations on the head (headgear and a tiara) that were glowing and dazzling with fiery brightness and radiated the glow resembling a brightly burning fire (10).

ललज्जिह्वा जटाजूटैर्मण्डिता चण्डरोमिका। प्रलयाम्भोदकालाभा घण्टापाशविधारिणी।।11।।
lalajjihvā jaṭājūṭairmaṇḍitā caṇḍaromikā /
pralayāmbhodakālābhā ghaṇṭāpāśavidhāriṇī //

She had a long, protruding and lapping tongue (which was moistened with blood and saliva), had a crown of matted tresses on her head along with large, sharp, spear-like, strong and robust body hair. She resembled the ocean at the time of the doomsday (when it is heaving and surging menacingly to drown the whole world with its anger) as well as 'Kāla' (death) personified. She held a chained whip in her hands (11).

अवस्कन्द्यरथात्तूर्ण खड्गखर्परधारिणी। श्येनीव रावणरथे पपात निमिषान्तरे।।12।।
avaskandyarathāttūrṇa khaḍgakharparadhāriṇī /
śyenīva rāvaṇarathe papāta nimiṣāntare //

She stepped down from the Puṣpaka chariot, holding a sword and a hollowed out skull in her hands. She lunged forward at the chariot of Rāvaṇa in a fraction of a moment like a hawk or falcon bird swooping down on its prey (12).

शिरांसि रावणस्याशु निमेषान्तरमात्रतः। खड्गेन तस्य चिच्छेद सहस्राणीह लीलया।।13।।
śirāṃsi rāvaṇasyāśu nimeṣāntaramātrataḥ /
khaḍgena tasya ciccheda sahasrāṇīha līlayā //

In less then a fraction of a second, she severed (sliced off) all the thousand heads of Rāvaṇa playfully and as if by magic, without the least effort, with one single, swift swoop of the sword (13).

अन्येषां योद्धृवीराणां शिरांसि नखरेण हि। भिन्ना निपातयामास भूमौ तेषां दुरात्मनाम्।।14।।
anyeṣāṃ yoddhṛvīrāṇāṃ śirāṃsi nakhareṇa hi /
bhinnā nipātayāmāsa bhūmau teṣāṃ durātmanām //

She pounced upon other brave demon warriors present there, piercing and lacerating their heads with her nails, resulting in those evil and sinful souls tumble down from their mounts like nine pins in the battlefield (14).

केषाश्चित्पाटयामास नख कोष्ठानि जानकी। खड्गेन चाच्छिनत्कांश्चित्क्रूरान्पादांश्च चिच्छिदे।।15।।
keṣāścitpāṭayāmāsa nakha koṣṭhāni jānakī /
khaḍgena cācchinatkāṃścitkrūrānpādāṃśca cicchide //

Jānakī (Sītā) sliced the belly of some of the demons by her sharp nails and severed the legs and other vital organs of others by her sword as they fell down (15).

खण्डं खण्डं चकारान्यांस्तिलशः कांश्चिदेव हि। अन्त्राण्यन्यस्याचकर्ष पादाघातेन कांश्चन।।16।।
khaṇḍaṃ khaṇḍaṃ cakārānyāṃstilaśaḥ kāṃścideva hi /
antrāṇyanyasyācakarṣa pādāghātena kāṃścana //

The bodies of some of the demons were shredded and cut into pieces by the violent and swift swinging of her sword, the pieces becoming as small as sesame seeds, while some were trampled underfoot or viciously kicked like a football and their intestines yanked out (16).

पार्श्वेन निजधानान्यान्पार्ष्णिनान्यानपोथयत्। कांश्चिच्छरीरवातेन दृष्ट्वाप्यन्यानपातयत्।।17।।
pārśvena nijadhānānyānpāṣirṇanānyānapothayat /
kāṃściccharīravātena drṣṭvāpyanyānapātayat //

She attacked the demons present on her either sides most viciously; some of them fell down merely by her glaring angry look (or they fainted just by a glance at her horribly terrifying form and her merciless, unrelenting offensive against them). Some were blown away by the blast of wind created by the hurtling and swift movement of her massive body, swaying and shifting so rapidly at break-neck speed that a virtual whirlwind-like powerful thrust was created which swept the demon warriors off their feet (like a tornado or twister moving across the battlefield) (17).

प्रलयं कुर्वती सीता राक्षसानां भयङ्करी। निजघानाट्टहासने कांश्चित्पृष्ठे द्विधाकरोत्।।18।।

pralayaṃ kurvatī sītā rākṣasānāṃ bhayaṅkarī /
nijaghānāṭṭahāsane kāṃścitpṛṣṭhe dvidhākarot //

The most horrifying, terribly ferocious, mercilessly vicious and extremely dreadful and unrelenting Sītā (as Mahākālī) created a doomsday scenario for the demons and began their en-mass annihilation. Letting out a bone chilling and hair raising shrill cry of war, she broke the backbone of some of them (18).

कांश्चित्केशान्समाकृष्य निष्पिपेष महीतले। सारथान्सगजान्साश्वान्सगदासहतोमरान्।।19।।
कांश्चिद्योधान्समाकृष्य मज्जयामास वारिधौ। गले चोद्वद्ध्य केषांश्चित्प्राणाञ्जग्राह जानकी।।20।।

kāṃścitkeśānsamākṛṣya niṣpipeṣa mahītale /
sārathānsagajānsāśvānsagadāsahatomarān //
kāṃścidyodhānsamākṛṣya majjayāmāsa vāridhau /
gale codvaddhya keṣāṃścitprāṇāñjagrāha jānakī //

Holding some by their hairs, she crushed them underfoot on the ground. Some others were dragged along with their chariots, horses, elephants and Tomaras (a type of weapon) in their hands and thrown into the ocean to drown. Some were killed by Jānakī by strangulation (19-20).

केषाञ्चित्स्कन्ध आरुह्य शिरांस्युत्पाटितानि हि। हुङ्कारेणाट्टहासेन काषाञ्चित्प्राणानहापयत्।।21।।

keṣāñcitskandha āruhya śirāṃsyutpāṭitāni hi /
huṅkāreṇāṭṭahāsena kāṣāñcitprāṇānahāpayat //

She jumped on the shoulders of some and bashed their heads. Some were killed by the mere shock of her terrifying war cry, horrifying shrill yell and other hair-raising and bone-chilling ghoulish noises emanating from her throat. [That is, some got heart attacks and they died instantly; some simply fainted out of terror; some collapsed when they saw her coming towards them; some were paralysed out of shock and some lost the strength of their knees to support them, wobbled, tottered and sank down unconscious to the ground, only to be trampled upon and crushed underfoot by the stampede.] (21)

काँश्चित्प्रचूर्ण्य वदनं पशुमारममारयत्। तान्सर्वान्निमिषेणैव निहत्य जनकात्मजा।।22।।
kāṃścitpracūrṇya vadanaṃ paśumāramamārayat /
tānsarvānnimiṣeṇaiva nihatya janakātmajā //

The heads of some were caught in a vice-like grip, fractured by a blow while they were being slaughtered as if they were animals of sacrifice. In this way, the daughter of Janaka, Jānakī, killed all of them in a 'Nimeṣa', i.e. a very short period of time (22).

तेषामन्त्रेण शिरसां मालाभिः कृतभूषणा। रावणस्य शिरांस्युग्राण्यादाय रणमूर्द्धनि।।23।।
कन्दुकक्रीडनं कर्तुं मनश्चक्रे मनस्विनी।। 23½।।
teṣāmantreṇa śirasāṃ mālābhiḥ kṛtabhūṣaṇā /
rāvaṇasya śirāṃsyugrāṇyādāya raṇamūrddhani //
kandukakrīḍanaṃ kartuṃ manaścakre manasvinī /

She made a garland of their severed heads and decorated herself with it. She picked up the heads of Rāvaṇa lying on the battlefield (23) and the wise and great Goddess (Mahākālī) decided to play football with those heads in the battlefield itself (23½). [23-23½]

एतस्मिन्नन्तरे तस्यां रोमकूपेभ्य उद्गताः।।24।।
मातरो विक्रताकाराः साट्टहासाः समाययुः। सह कन्दुकलीलार्थे सीतया ताः सहस्रशः।।25।।
etasminnantare tasyāṃ romakūpebhya udgatāḥ //
mātaro vikratākārāḥ sāṭṭahāsāḥ samāyayuḥ /
saha kandukalīlārthe sītayā tāḥ sahasraśaḥ //

At that moment, many horrible looking and most terrifying mothers or female spirits of war (such as vampires, ogres, ghosts and phantoms) emerged from the hairs on her skin. They laughed menacingly and derisively in a dreadful and horrifying manner and came to join her in the game (of football). They were thousands in numbers, and all of them helped Sītā to play ball with those thousands of heads lying scattered all around on the slushy battlefield (24-25).

तासां कासाञ्चिदाख्यास्ये नामानि शृणुव्रत। याभिर्व्याप्तास्त्रयो लोकाः कल्याणीभिश्चराचराः।।26।।
tāsāṃ kāsāñcidākhyāsye nāmāni śṛṇuvrata /
yābhirvyāptāstrayo lokāḥ kalyāṇībhiścarācarāḥ //

Oh the righteous one (Bhāradvāja)! Listen to the names of some of those female spirits of war who were present there but are nevertheless always present everywhere in all the three worlds (the nether, terrestrial and celestial worlds). They provide auspiciousness to all the creatures of this world consisting of either the moveable or immoveable creation (26).

> [Note :—On the face of it, it appears to be incredulous to use the adjective 'Kalyāṇī', literally meaning the one who provides auspiciousness and takes care of the welfare of others, or the one who bestows goodness and wellbeing upon the creatures of the world, for the spirits of the battlefield. But these spirits kill and devour demons who represent evil, wicked, sinful, pervert forces of creation that torment those who are good and righteous. By killing, vanquishing or annihilating them, these female spirits of war indirectly protect the other non-demonic creatures of the creation by providing them with freedom from fear and torment of the demons. It is equivalent to giving them auspiciousness and looking after their welfare and thinking for their good and wellbeing.]

प्रभावती विशालाक्षी पालिता गोनसी तथा। श्रीमती बहुला चैव तथैव बहुपुत्रिका।।27।।
prabhāvatī viśālākṣī pālitā gonasī tathā /
śrīmatī bahulā caiva tathaiva bahuputrikā //

[Now sage Vālmīki lists the names of the female ogres and spirits of war that emerged from the hairs of Mahākālī and played with her in the battlefield of Puṣkara—] Prabhāvatī, Viṣālākṣī, Pālitā, Gonasī, Śrīmatī, Bahulā and Bahu Putrikā (27).

अप्सुजाता च गोपाली बृहदम्बालिका तथा। जयावती मालतिका ध्रुवरत्ना भयङ्करी।।28।।
apsujātā ca gopālī bṛhadambālikā tathā /
jayāvatī mālatikā dhruvaratnā bhayaṅkarī //

Apsujātā, Gopālī, Bṛhadambālikā, Jayāvatī, Mālatikā, Dhruvaratnā and Bhayaṅkarī (28).

वसुदामा सुदामा च विशोका नन्दिनी तथा। एकचूडा महाचूडा चक्रनेमिश्चटीतमा।।29।।
vasudāmā sudāmā ca viśokā nandinī tathā /
ekacūḍā mahācūḍā cakranemiścaṭītamā //

Vasudāmā, Sudāmā, Viśokā, Nandinī, Ekacūḍā, Mahācūḍā, Cakranemi and Ṭītamā (29).

उत्तेजनी जया सेना कमलाक्ष्यथ शोभना। शत्रुञ्जया तथा चैव क्रोधना शलभा खरी।।30।।
uttejanī jayā senā kamalākṣyatha śobhanā /
śatruñjayā tathā caiva krodhanā śalabhā kharī //

Uttejanī, Jayā, Senā, Kamalākṣī, Śobhanā, Śatruñjayā, Krodhanā, Śalabhī and Kharī (30).

माधवी शुभ्रवस्त्रा च तीर्थसेना जटोज्ज्वला। गीतप्रिया च कल्याणी कद्रुरोमामिताशना।।31।।

mādhavī śubhravastrā ca tīrthasenā jaṭojjvalā /
gītapriyā ca kalyāṇī kadruromāmitāśanā //

Mādhavī, Śubhra Vastrā, Tirthasenā, Jaṭojjvalā, Gītapriyā, Kalyāṇī, Kadruromā and Amitāśanā (31).

मेघस्वना भोगवती सुभ्रूश्च कनकावती। अलाताक्षी वेगवती विद्युज्जिह्वा च भारती।।32।।

meghasvanā bhogavatī subhrūśca kanakāvatī /
alātākṣī vegavatī vidyujjihvā ca bhāratī //

Meghasvanā, Bhogavatī, Subhru, Kanakāvatī, Alātākṣī, Vegavatī, Vidyujjihvā and Bhāratī (32).

पद्मावती सुनेत्रा च गन्धरा बहुयोजना। सन्नालिका महाकाली कमला च महाबला।।33।।

padmāvatī sunetrā ca gandharā bahuyojanā /
sannālikā mahākālī kamalā ca mahābalā //

Padmāvatī, Sunetrā, Gandharā, Bahuyojanā, Sannālikā, Mahākālī, Kamalā and Mahābalā (33).

सुदामा बहुदामा च सुप्रभा च यशस्विनी। नृत्यप्रिया परानन्दा शतोलूखलमेखला।।34।।

sudāmā bahudāmā ca suprabhā ca yaśasvinī /
nṛtyapriyā parānandā śatolūkhalamekhalā //

Sudāmā, Bahudāmā, Suprabhā, Yaśasvinī, Nṛtyapriyā, Parānandā, Śatolūkhala and Mekhalā (34).

शतघण्टा शतानन्दा आनन्दा भवतारिणी। वपुष्मती चन्द्रसीता भद्रकाली सटामला।।35।।

śataghaṇṭā śatānandā ānandā bhavatāriṇī /
vapuṣmatī candrasītā bhadrakālī saṭāmalā //

Śataghaṇṭā, Śatānandā, Ānandā, Bhavatāriṇī, Vapuṣmatī, Candrasītā, Bhadrakālī and Saṭāmalā (35).

झंकारिका निष्कुटिका रामा चत्वरवासिनी। सुमला सुस्तनवती वृद्धिकामा जयप्रिया।।36।।

jhaṃkārikā niṣkuṭikā rāmā catvaravāsinī /
sumalā sustanavatī vṛddhikāmā jayapriyā //

Jhaṅkārikā, Niṣkuṭikā, Rāmā, Catavaravāsinī, Sumalā, Sustanavatī, Vṛddhikāmā, Jayapriyā (36).

धना सुप्रसादा च भवदा च जनेश्वरी। एडी भेडी समेडी च वेतालजननी तथा।।37।।

dhanā suprasādā ca bhavadā ca janeśvarī /
eḍī bheḍī sameḍī ca vetālajananī tathā //

Dhanā, Suprasādā, Bhavadā, Janeśvarī, Eḍī, Bheḍī, Sameḍī and Vetālajananī (or the mother of phantoms) (37).

कन्दुतिः कन्दुका चैव वेदमित्रा सुदेविका। लम्बास्या, केतकी, चित्रसेना, चलाचला।।38।।

kandutiḥ kandukā caiva vedamitrā sudevikā /
lambāsyā, ketakī, citrasenā, calācalā //

Kanduti, Kandukā, Vedmitrā, Sudevikā, Lambāsyā, Ketakī, Citrasenā and Calācalā (38).

कुक्कुटिका शृङ्गालिका तथा शंकुलिका हडा। कन्दालिका काकलिका कुम्भिकाय शतोदरी।।39।।

kukkuṭikā śṛṅgālikā tathā śaṃkulikā haḍā /
kandālikā kākalikā kumbhikāya śatodarī //

Kukkuṭikā, Śṛṅgālikā, Śaṅkulikā, Haḍā, Kandālikā, Kākalikā, Kumbhikā and Śatodarī (39).

उत्क्राथिनी जवेला च महावेगा च कङ्किनी। मनोजवा कटकिनी प्रधसा पूतना तथा।।40।।

utkrāthinī javelā ca mahāvegā ca kaṅkinī /
manojavā kaṭakinī pradhasā pūtanā tathā //

Utkrāthini, Javelā, Mahāvega, Kaṅkinī, Manojavā, Kaṭkinī, Pradhasā and Pūtanā (40).

खेशया चातिद्रढिमा कोशनाथतडित्प्रभा। मन्दोदरी च तुण्डोच कोटर मेघवाहिनी।।41।।

kheśayā cātidraḍhimā kośanāthataḍitprabhā /
mandodarī ca tuṇḍoca koṭara meghavāhinī //

Kheśayā, Atidraḍhimā, Kośanātha, Taḍitprabhā, Mandodarī, Tuṇḍoca, Koṭara and Meghavāhinī (41).

सुभगा लम्बिनी लम्बा बसुचूडा विकत्थिनी। ऊर्ध्ववेणीधरा चैव पिङ्गाक्षी लोहमेखला।।42।।

subhagā lambinī lambā basucūḍā vikatthinī /
ūrdhvaveṇīdharā caiva piṅgākṣī lohamekhalā //

Subhagā, Lambinī, Lambā, Vasucūḍā, Vikatthinī, Ūrdhvaveṇīdharā, Piṅgākṣī and Lohamekhalā (42).

पृथुवक्त्रा मधुलिहा मधुकुम्भा तथैव च। यक्षाणिका मत्सरिका जरायुर्जर्जरानना।।43।।

pṛthuvaktrā madhulihā madhukumbhā tathaiva ca /
yakṣāṇikā matsarikā jarāyurjarjarānanā //

Pṛthuvaktrā, Madhulihā, Madhukumbhā, Yakṣaṇikā, Matsarikā, Jarāyu and Jarjarānanā (43).

ख्याता डहडहा चैव तथा धमधमा द्विजा। खण्डखण्डा पृथुश्रोणी पूषणामणिकुट्टिका।।44।।

khyātā ḍahaḍahā caiva tathā dhamadhamā dvijā /
khaṇḍakhaṇḍā pṛthuśroṇī pūṣaṇāmaṇikuṭṭikā //

Khyātā, Ḍahaḍahā, Dhamadhāmā, Dvijā, Khaṇḍakhaṇḍā, Pṛthuśreṇī, Pūṣaṇā and Maṇikuṭṭikā (44).

अम्लोचा चैव निम्लोचा तथा लम्बपयोधरा। वेणुवीणाधरा चैव पिङ्गाक्षी लोहमेखला।।45।।

amlocā caiva nimlocā tathā lambapayodharā /
veṇuvīṇādharā caiva piṅgākṣī lohamekhalā //

Amlocā, Nimlocā, Lambapayodharā, Veṇuvīṇādharā, Piṅgākṣī and Lohamekhalā (45).

शशोलूकमुखी हृष्टा खरजङ्घा महाजरा। शिशुमारमुखी श्वेता लोहिताक्षी विभीषणा।।46।।

śaśolūkamukhī hṛṣṭā kharajaṅghā mahājarā /
śiśumāramukhī śvetā lohitākṣī vibhīṣaṇā //

Śaśolūkamukhī, Hṛṣṭā, Kharajaṅghā, Mahājarā, Śiśumāramukhī, Śvetā, Lohitākṣī and Vibhīṣaṇa (46).

जटालीका कामचरी दीर्घजिह्वाबलोत्कटा। कालहिका यामालिका मुकुटामुकुटेश्वरी।।47।।

jaṭālīkā kāmacarī dīrghajihvābalotkaṭā /
kālahikā yāmālikā mukuṭāmukuṭeśvarī //

Jaṭālīkā, Kāmacarī, Dīrghajihvā, Balotkaṭā, Kālahikā, Yāmālikā, Mukuṭā and Mukuṭeśvarī (47).

लोहिताक्षी महाकाया हविष्पिण्डा च पिण्डिका।
एकत्वचा सुकूर्मा च कुल्लाकर्णी च कर्णिका:।।48।।

lohitākṣī mahākāyā haviṣpiṇḍā ca piṇḍikā /
ekatvacā sukūrmā ca kullākarṇī ca karṇikāḥ //

Lohitākṣī, Mahākāyā, Haviṣpiṇḍā, Piṇḍikā, Ekatvacā, Sukūrmā, Kullākarṇī and Karṇikā (48).

सुरकर्णी चतुष्कर्णी कर्णप्रावरणा तथा। चतुष्पथनिकेता च गोकर्णी महिषानना ।।49।।

surakarṇī catuṣkarṇī karṇaprāvaraṇā tathā /
catuṣpathaniketā ca gokarṇī mahiṣānanā //

Surakarṇī, Catuṣkarṇī, Karṇapravarṇā, Catuṣpathaniketā, Gokarṇī and Mahiṣānanā (49).

खरकर्णी महाकर्णी भेरीस्वनमहास्वना। शङ्खकुम्भश्रवा चैव भगदा च महाबला ।।50।।

kharakarṇī mahākarṇī bherīsvanamahāsvanā /
śaṅkhakumbhaśravā caiva bhagadā ca mahābalā //

Kharakarṇī, Mahākarṇī, Bherīsvanā, Mahāsvanā, Śaṅkha-Kumbha-Śravā, Bhagadā and Mahābalā (50).

गणा च सुगणा चैव कामदाप्यथ कन्यका। चतुष्पथरता चैव भूतितीर्थान्यगोचरा ।।51।।

gaṇā ca sugaṇā caiva kāmadāpyatha kanyakā /
catuṣpatharatā caiva bhūtitīrthānyagocarā //

Gaṇā, Sugaṇā, Kāmadāpyatha, Kanyakā, Catuṣpatharatā, Bhūtitīrthā and Anyagocarā (51).

पशुदा विमुदा चैव सुखदा च महायशाः। पयोदा गोमहिषदा सुविशाला चतुर्भुजा ।।52।।

paśudā vimudā caiva sukhadā ca mahāyaśāḥ /
payodā gomahiṣadā suviśālā caturbhujā //

Paśudā, Vimudā, Sukhadā, Mahāyaśā, Payodā, Gomahiṣadā, Suviśālā and Caturbhujā (52).

प्रतिष्ठा सुप्रतिष्ठा च रोचमाना सुलोचना। नौकर्णी मुखकर्णी च विशिरा मन्थिनी तथा ।।53।।

pratiṣṭhā supratiṣṭhā ca rocamānā sulocanā /
naukarṇī mukhakarṇī ca viśirā manthinī tathā //

Pratiṣṭhā, Su-Pratiṣṭhā, Rocamānā, Sulocanā, Naukarṇī, Mukhakarṇī, Viśirā and Manthinī (53).

एकवक्त्रा मेघरवा मेघवामा द्विरोचना। एताश्चान्याश्च बहवो मातरः कोटिकोटिशः ।।54।।
असंख्याताः समाजग्मुःक्रीडितुं सीतया सह। दीर्घवक्ष्यो दीर्घदन्त्यो दीर्घतुण्ड्यो द्विजोत्तम ।।55।।

ekavaktrā megharavā meghavāmā dvirocanā /
etāścānyāśca bahavo mātaraḥ koṭikoṭiśaḥ //
asaṃkhyātāḥ samājagmuḥkrīḍituṃ sītayā saha /
dīrghavakṣyo dīrghadantyo dīrghatuṇḍyo dvijottama //

Ekvaktrā, Megharavā, Meghavāmā and Dvirocanā. Besides them (listed above from verse no. 27-53½), there were thousands and thousands of other 'mothers' (54) who had arrived on the battlefield to play around with Sītā as Mahākālī.

[Now, instead of detailing their names, I shall broadly describe to you their features—] Oh exalted sage (Bhāradvāja) ! Some of them had broad chests, others had large teeth and large nostrils (55). [54-55]

सरसा मधुराश्चैव यौवनस्थः स्वलंकृताः। महात्म्येन च संयुक्ताः कामरूपधरास्तथा।।56।।

sarasā madhurāścaiva yauvanasthaḥ svalaṃkṛtāḥ /
mahātmyena ca saṃyuktāḥ kāmarūpadharāstathā //

They were pleasing and charming and sweet talking, were in their prime of youth, were fully decorated, were endowed with the glory of fame, majesty and importance, and could assume any form they wished (56).

निर्मांसगात्र्यः श्वेताश्च तथा काञ्चनसन्निभाः। कृष्णमेघनिभाश्चान्या धूम्राश्च द्विजपुङ्गव।।57।।

nirmāṃsagātryaḥ śvetāśca tathā kāñcanasannibhāḥ /
kṛṣṇameghanibhāścānyā dhūmrāśca dvijapuṅgava //

Oh exalted sage (Bhāradvāja) ! Some had no flesh on their bodies (i.e. they were merely skeletons covered by a skin); some had white or golden countenance while still others were dark complexioned like dark clouds, or had the colour of smoke (57).

अरुणाभा महाभागा दीर्घकेश्यः सिताम्बराः। ऊर्ध्ववेणीधराश्चैव पिङ्गाक्ष्या लम्बमेखलाः।।58।।

aruṇābhā mahābhāgā dīrghakeśyaḥ sitāmbarāḥ /
ūrdhvaveṇīdharāścaiva piṅgākṣyā lambamekhalāḥ //

Some had red coloured skin, some were more fortunate than others, some had long hairs, some wore white garments, some had their hairs tied in a big knot (bun), some had yellow-tinged eyes, and some had long or large 'Mekhalā' on their bodies. [Mekhalā has 3 connotations—(i) a bracelet, (ii) a waistband, and (iii) a sleeveless blouse.] (58)

लम्बोदर्यो लम्बकर्णस्तथा लम्बपयोधराः। ताम्राक्ष्यस्ताम्रवर्णाश्च हर्यक्ष्यश्च तथापराः।।59।।

lambodaryo lambakarṇastathā lambapayodharāḥ /
tāmrākṣyastāmravarṇāśca haryakṣyaśca tathāparāḥ //

They had large tummies and elongated ears, huge and broad lips, read copper coloured eyes which were large and supernatural in appearance (59).

शत्रूणां विग्रहे नित्यं भयदास्ता भवंत्यपि। कामरूपधराश्चैव जवे वायुसमास्तथा।।60।।

śatrūṇāṃ vigrahe nityaṃ bhayadāstā bhavaṃtyapi /
kāmarūpadharāścaiva jave vāyusamāstathā //

They could perpetually instill fear in the bodies of their enemies. They could assume any form that they wished, and were as swift as the wind (60).

शिरांसि रक्षसां गृह्य गण्डशैलोपमान्यपि। चक्रीडुः सीतया सार्द्धं तस्मिन्रणधरातले।।61।।

śirāṃsi rakṣasāṃ gṛhya gaṇḍaśailopamānyapi /
cakrīḍuḥ sītayā sārddhaṃ tasminraṇadharātale //

Catching hold of the huge severed heads of the demons which were colossus like the summit of mountains, these lady spirits of war started playing a game of ball with them on the surface of the earth (i.e. in the battlefield) (61).

मुण्डमालाधराश्चैव काश्चिन्मुण्ड विभूषणाः। रणाङ्गणे महाघोरे गृध्रकङ्कशिवान्विते।।62।।
मांसासृक्पंकिले घोरे तत्र तत्र पुरोपमे। ननर्त जानकी देवी घोर काली महाबला।।63।।

muṇḍamālādharāścaiva kāścinmuṇḍa vibhūṣaṇāḥ /
raṇāṅgaṇe mahāghore gṛdhrakaṅkaśivānvite //
māṃsāsṛkpaṃkile ghore tatra tatra puropame /
nanarta jānakī devī ghora kālī mahābalā //

Some wore a garland of skulls or severed heads while others wore ornaments made out of them. The most abominable, horrifying and mortifying field of war had scowling, crowing and howling hordes of vultures, kites and crows as well as jackals (62), hopping, howling, growling, gnawing and tearing away at fallen warriors and animals, and scampering around the marsh-like slushy ground created by blood kneaded with flesh and mud of the earth. It was like a most horrendous, utterly horrifying and extremely ghastly city of the dead. In it, Goddess Jānakī (Sītā), in her terrible, horrifying, most awe inspiring, abominable and ghostly form as the most powerful and strong Mahākālī, danced skittishly and frantically in a mad frenzy here and there, everywhere, in that fearful, ghostly and desolate city of the dead (63). [62-63]

तदा चकम्पे पृथिवी नौरिवानिलचालिता। चेलुश्च भूधराः सर्वे समुद्राश्च चकम्पिरे।।64।।

tadā cakampe pṛthivī naurivānilacālitā /
celuśca bhūdharāḥ sarve samudrāśca cakampire //

The shaking and trembling of the earth at that time resembled a boat buffeted and tossed about by the wind on a rough sea. All the mountains and oceans shook and trembled (64).

स्वर्गिणा च विमानानि खात्पेतुर्भयतो द्विज। सूर्यस्य दुद्रुवुर्भीता वाजिनो मुक्तरश्मयः।।65।।

svargiṇā ca vimānāni khātpeturbhayato dvija /
sūryasya dudruvurbhītā vājino muktaraśmayaḥ //

Oh Brāhmin (Bhāradvāja)! The air planes of Gods started falling down from the sky out of terror, and the horses of the Sun's chariot went off their path (65).

यदा न सेहे जानक्याः भारं सोढुं वसुन्धरा। गन्तुमैच्छत पातालं सीतापादाग्रपीडिता।।66।।
अट्टहासेन सीताया मातृणां हुंकृतेन च। प्रलयं मेनिरे लोकाः किमेतदिति विह्वलाः।।67।।

yadā na sehe jānakyāḥ bhāraṃ soḍhuṃ vasundharā /
gantumaicchata pātālaṃ sītāpādāgrapīḍitā //
aṭṭahāsena sītāyā mātṛṇāṃ huṃkṛtena ca /
pralayaṃ menire lokāḥ kimetaditi vihvalāḥ //

When the 'Vasundharā' (earth) could not bear the burden of Sītā (as Mahākālī) and began sinking into the nether world under the pressure of her feet (66), and there was a horrifying cacophony created by Sītā's delirious, shrill laughter accompanied by the aggressive posturing, stomping and war cries of the 'mother spirits of war' who had assembled there, all the creatures took it to be the ominous sign of an imminent catastrophic disaster the like of which occurs during the doomsday, and consequentially they lost their patience and became very agitated, restless and terrified (67). [66-67]

धरापातालगमनं वितर्क्य सुरसत्तमैः। सम्प्रार्थितो महादेवः स्वयमायाद्रणाजिरम्।।68।।

dharāpātālagamanaṃ vitarkya surasattamaiḥ /
samprārthito mahādevaḥ svayamāyādraṇājiram //

Watching the earth sinking into the nether worlds, the Gods prayed to Mahādeva (Lord Śiva) to intervene (and prevent the earth from disappearing into nowhere). Then the Lord came to the battlefield himself (68).

जानक्याः पादविन्यासे शवरूपधरो हरः। आत्मानं स्तम्भयामास धरणीधृतिहेतवे।।69।।

jānakyāḥ pādavinyāse śavarūpadharo haraḥ /
ātmānaṃ stambhayāmāsa dharaṇīdhṛtihetave //

Śiva assumed the form of a corpse and lay himself under the feet of Jānakī (Mahākālī) in order to protect the earth from sinking further (i.e. Lord Śiva acted as a cushion between Sītā's feet and the earth, and he prevented the downward thrust of her leg from pushing the earth further down or splitting and cracking it under the pressure of her foot) (69).

सर्वभारसहो देवः सीतापादतले स्थितः। शवरूपो विरूपाक्षः स्थिताभूद्धरा तदा।।70।।

sarvabhārasaho devaḥ sītāpādatale sthitaḥ /
śavarūpo virūpākṣaḥ sthitābhūddharā tadā //

When Lord Śiva placed himself under the feet of Mahākālī, disguised unconventionally as a dead body and bore the brunt of her force and weight, it was only then that the earth became stabilised and stopped subsiding further (70).

तथाप्युरिगा लोका न स्थातु सेहिरे क्षणम्। सीतायाः पादशब्देन शिरसा हुंकृतेन च।
निःश्वासवातसङ्घातेर्दुःस्थिता भूर्भुवादयः।।71।।

tathāpyurigā lokā na sthātu sehire kṣaṇam /
sītāyāḥ pādaśabdena śirasā huṃkṛtena ca /
niḥśvāsavātasaṅghāterduḥsthitā bhūrbhuvādayaḥ //

But the worlds above the earth still could not become stable. By the sound of Sītā's (Mahākālī's) feet stomping violently and angrily on the ground and kicking at other things in the battlefield, by the aggressive loud yells or the vicious war cry emanating from the clenched teeth in her mouth, and by the thrust of the powerful breath coming out with force from her nostrils, and the vacuum created by her violently inhaling breath—all the worlds, such as Bhūḥ (the terrestrial world), Bhuvaḥ (the celestial world) and Svaḥ (the heavens) remained extremely agitated and restless (i.e. they swayed and trembled when lashed by these two powerful gusts of wind—coming out and going in through her nostrils and open mouth) (71).

धरणितनयया यद्धीमनृत्यं धरण्यां।कृतमिह मनसा तच्चिन्तयन्तो द्विजेन्द्राः।
जयति जयति सीतेत्याहुरिन्द्रादिदेवाः । सपदि भुवन भंगं मन्यमाना विषेदुः।।72।।

dharaṇitanayayā yadbhīmanṛtyaṃ dharaṇyāṃ /
kṛtamiha manasā taccintayanto dvijendrāḥ /
jayati jayati sītetyāhurindrādidevāḥ /
sapadi bhuvana bhaṃgaṃ manyamānā viṣeduḥ //

The great dance—which was unprecedented, most formidable, extremely horrifying, awe inspiring, spirit stirring, bone chilling and hair raising—was akin to the dance of death portending the annihilation of the creation at the time of doomsday. This dance was performed by the daughter of mother earth (Sītā) on the surface of the earth itself (i.e. on the battlefield). It instilled terrible awe and compelled the wonderstruck exalted sages and seers as well as the other Gods such as Indra to regretfully think that the splitting or breaking apart of the world (i.e. the annihilation of the creation) was imminent. Consequentially, they felt very remorseful and anguished, but then decided to praise the stupendous glories, the majestic powers, the matchless strength and unparalleled prowess as well as the cosmic supernatural potentials of Sītā—who was a manifestation of the divine cosmic force of Mother Nature called 'Śakti' and was now disguised as Mahākālī in the battlefield of Puṣkara—in chorus, with a loud and raised voice of applause, in order to calm her down by lauding her glories in these words—'Glory to you, blessed be you ' (72).

[Note :—They were so awestricken, stunned and alarmed at the developments that they tried to calm her down by praising and lauding her because they knew that the anger of the Goddess could finally, if not brought under control immediately, annihilate the entire creation. They dared not admonish or reproach her or say anything to annoy her anymore, such as to warn her not to tinker with the process of creation and evolution. They did not wish to add fuel to the already raging fire and further stoke her anger, as they feared that she might now turn at them in disgust for having brought about all this. To calm her down, they began to pray to her so that she feels that the sages and seers and the Gods were happy at her deeds, and then when she has cheered up a bit, attempt would be made to make her see reason. But as of now, the prime concern was to douse the fire of her anger, vehemenance and wrath.]

Thus ends Canto 23 of the ancient epic called Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa written by sage Vālmīki describing how Sītā had assumed the most ferocious form of Goddess Mahākālī and how Rāvaṇa was killed by her. This Canto also describes the fearful scenario of the battlefield.

* * *

Canto 24

Śrī Rāma revived back to life by Brahmā, the creator, and he was reassured by him that everything was alright when he got terrified at the sight of the ferocious Sītā in the form of Mahākālī in the battlefield, and the havoc that she had caused all around

Realising that if Sītā, as Mahākālī, the great Goddess of death and destruction, is not somehow calmed down, the creation was on the brink of complete annihilation by her anger and wrath, the creator Brahmā led all the Gods in prayer to appease and please her. When she pointed at Śrī Rāma lying unconscious on the chariot and her determination not to spare anything in the world as a retribution and punishment for bringing this calamitous thing to happen, the creator and the Gods touched Śrī Rāma and got him back to life. Regaining consciousness, Śrī Rāma saw Mahākālī in her ferocious form and he was extremely terrified at the sight. Then Brahmā made him aware of the developments that had taken place during the time when he had lain unconscious on the chariot and Sītā had avenged his falling down in the battle by killing all the demons single handedly. With this insight, Śrī Rāma felt somehow reassured and regained his composure.

संरम्भवेगं सीताया वीक्ष्य ब्रह्मपुरोगमाः। सलोकपालास्त्रिदशा ऋषिभिः पितृभिः सह॥1॥
प्रसादयितुमुद्युक्ताः सीतां ते तुष्टुवुः सुराः। कृताञ्जलिपुटा देवाः प्रणम्य च पुनः पुनः॥2॥

saṃrambhavegaṃ sītāyā vīkṣya brahmapurogamāḥ /
salokapālāstridaśā ṛṣibhiḥ pitṛbhiḥ saha //
prasādayitumudyuktāḥ sītāṃ te tuṣṭuvuḥ surāḥ /
kṛtāñjalipuṭā devāḥ praṇamya ca punaḥ punaḥ //

Observing such a vehemently uncompromising, relentlessly vengeful, ferociously wrathful, cruelly unforgiving and the mercilessly vicious anger, wrath and speed by which Sītā, as Mahākālī, not only laid to waste the entire army of demons but was now poised to annihilate the rest of the world (see verse nos. 23-24 below), all the Gods, sages and seers and the spirits of dead ancestors (called Pitaras) joined the creator Brahmā to pay tributes to her stupendous cosmic powers and pray to her to calm down; they tried to appease and placate her before any calamitous event could happen. They repeatedly bowed reverentially before her with folded hands, politely and submissively (1-2).

ब्रह्माद्याः स्तोतुमारब्धाः सीतां राक्षसानाशिनीम्। या सा माहेश्वरी शक्तिर्ज्ञानरूपातिलालसा।।3।।
अनन्या निष्कले तत्त्वे संस्थिता रामवल्लभा। स्वाभाविकी च त्वन्मूला प्रभा भानोस्तथामला।।4।।

brahmādyāḥ stotumārabdhāḥ sītāṃ rākṣasānāśinīm /
yā sā māheśvarī śaktirjñānarūpātilālasā //
ananyā niṣkale tattve saṃsthitā rāmavallabhā /
svābhāvikī ca tvanmūlā prabhā bhānostathāmalā //

Brahmā and others began to pray respectfully to Sītā who was the annihilator of demons as follows—'The great divine Goddess of the entire creation, who is an embodiment and personification of energy and strength, powers and potentials as well as an eager pursuer of wisdom, erudition and sagacity (3), has manifested herself in the form of the dear wife of Śrī Rāma. She (Sītā) is basically measureless and infinite (as the macrocosmic, attributeless, all powerful and majestic source of stupendous energy of creation) and she is without any blemishes, taints, faults and shortcoming. The cosmic divine energy called Śakti has its existence because of you (i.e. you are an embodiment of that energy as the cosmic Goddess) and your glory and radiance is as pure, brilliant and shining as the splendour of the Sun (3-4).

एका सा वैष्णवी शक्ति रणे कोपाधिवेगतः। परापरेण रूपेण क्रीडन्ति समसन्निधो।।5।।

ekā sā vaiṣṇavī śakti raṇe kopādhivegataḥ /
parāpareṇa rūpeṇa krīḍanti samasannidho //

That is the only 'Vaiṣṇavī Śakti' (i.e. the stupendous powers and strengths of Lord Viṣṇu, who is the sustainer and protector of this universe, unleashed to protect the creation against being tormented by evil forces represented by the demons) that is playing around angrily with a blinding speed near Śrī Rāma in the battlefield. She is in her supernatural form at present (5).

सेव्यं करोति सकलं तस्याः कार्यमिदं जगत्। न कार्यं चापि करणमीश्वरश्चेति निश्चयः।।6।।

sevyaṃ karoti sakalaṃ tasyāḥ kāryamidaṃ jagat /
na kāryaṃ cāpi karaṇamīśvaraśceti niścayaḥ //

She is the divine, cosmic, subtle and supernatural energy that performs all the tasks of this world and then enjoys them. The supreme

Lord called Īśvara surely does not do anything himself (i.e. the Lord needs the divine comic powers, called Śakti, to carry out his wishes and sustain and protect this creation; without her help, the Lord is helpless indeed, though this Śakti has been created by the Lord himself in order to carry out his responsibilities) (6).

चतस्त्रः शक्तयो देव्याः स्वरूपत्वेन संस्थिताः। अधिष्ठान वशादस्या जानक्या रामयोषितः।।7।।

catasraḥ śaktayo devyāḥ svarūpatvena saṃsthitāḥ /
adhiṣṭhāna vaśādasyā jānakyā rāmayoṣitaḥ //

The stupendous powers, prowess and potentials of the Goddess have four forms or manifestations as it is revealed in four ways. [See verse no. 8 below.] Because of delusions and ignorance about the actual reality, resulting in the creation of illusions and deceptions, one believes that Jānakī (Sītā) is the consort of Śrī Rāma and dependent on him (7).

शान्तिर्विद्या प्रतिष्ठा न निवृत्तिश्चेति ताः स्मृताः। चतुर्व्यूहस्ततो देवः प्रोच्यते परमेश्वरः।।8।।

śāntirvidyā pratiṣṭhā na nivṛttiśceti tāḥ smṛtāḥ /
caturvyūhastato devaḥ procyate parameśvaraḥ //

'Śānti' (peace, serenity, calmness and tranquility, bliss and beatitude), 'Vidyā' (truthful knowledge, erudition, wisdom, sagacity, skill and expertise), 'Pratiṣṭhā' (fame, majesty, renown, good name, respect, honour, dignity and reputation) and 'Nivṛtti' (renunciation, detachment, dispassion, indifference and non-involvement)—these are the four great characters that define Lord 'Parameśvara' (the supreme, transcendental Lord of creation) (8).

अनया परया देवः स्वात्मानन्दं समश्नुते। यत्त्वस्त्यनादिसंसिद्धमैश्वर्यमतुलं महत्।।9।।
त्वत्सम्बन्धांवाप्तं तद्रामेण परमात्मना। सैषा सर्वेश्वरी देवी सर्वभूतप्रवर्तिका।।10।।

anayā parayā devaḥ svātmānandaṃ samaśnute /
yattvastyanādisaṃsiddhamaiśvaryamatulaṃ mahat //
tvatsambandhāṃvāptaṃ tadrāmeṇa paramātmanā /
saiṣā sarveśvarī devī sarvabhūtapravartikā //

It is through the supreme, transcendental and divine 'Śakti' (energy, power, strength and potentials) that the Lord derives 'bliss of the self' (i.e. he enjoys the peace and tranquility associated with the Ātmā/soul because he does not have to bother about the nitty-gritty of the day to day administration of the creation which he has himself created, but has now left on this 'Śakti' of his to take care of; the Lord is freed from the worries of the routine work of the creation and as a consequence he has the time to devote to meditation and contemplation upon his Ātmā that gives him eternal peace and bliss). He who is eternal and has no beginning or end, who is fully accomplished and fulfilled, who is incomparable, unparalleled and unique, and who possesses supreme greatness, majesty, fame and glory (9)—that supreme, divine, sublime and transcendental entity is known as Śrī Rāma (i.e. it has manifested or revealed itself in the body of Śrī Rāma). Śrī Rāma is the 'Parmātmā', the supreme Lord, the supreme Ātmā of the creation, and he is accessible only through you (i.e. through the gracious Sītā who is his divine, merciful and almighty counterpart, and by her benevolent help, interceding on the behalf of devotees). Such a divine, all powerful Goddess is the progenitor and inspirer of all the creatures (10). [9-10]

त्वयेदं भ्रामयेदीशो मायावी पुरुषोत्तमः। सैषा मायात्मिका शक्तिः सर्वाकारा सनातनी ।। 11 ।।

tvayedaṃ bhrāmayedīśo māyāvī puruṣottamaḥ /
saiṣā māyātmikā śaktiḥ sarvākārā sanātanī //

The supreme Lord has assumed the illusionary form of 'Puruṣottama' (literally, the most exalted and the best male in creation; here meaning Śrī Rāma), and this form moves around and shows signs of activity and life because of you (i.e. because of Sītā; Śrī Rāma is active and appears to do everything in this world because it is you who makes it possible to happen, but the credit goes to Śrī Rāma). This stupendous, maverick, magical and imperceptible 'Śakti' can assume any form that it wishes and has the authority to do whatever it likes and thinks fit to do. It is primary, ancient and existent from the beginning of creation (11).

वैश्वरूपं महेशस्य सर्वदा सम्प्रकाशयेत्। अन्याश्च शक्तयो मुख्यास्त्वा देवि विनिर्मिता ।। 12 ।।

vaiśvarūpaṃ maheśasya sarvadā samprakāśayet /
anyāśca śaktayo mukhyāstvā devi vinirmitā //

The macrocosmic, all pervading and all encompassing form of Lord Śiva is always highlighted by you. [That is, the continuous process of death that occurs in all the corners of the creation is an activity that is carried out by you, but since this is the designated duty of Lord Śiva, who has been entrusted with the job of causing death, decay and destruction, or in short, maintaining the ecological balance and bringing about the conclusion of the creation into effect, it appears to be done by him whereas in fact it is you who actually does it. The occurrence of 'death' establishes—or highlights—the eminent presence of 'Śiva' factor in creation, but subtly it is you who brings death about). Further, 'Śiva' also refers to auspiciousness, enlightenment and truth. Therefore, these virtues in creation are brought to the fore by your grace and magnanimity.

Oh Goddess! All other chief 'Śaktis' (powers and potentials) in this world have also been created or produced by you and no one else (12).

ज्ञानशक्तिः क्रियाशक्तिः प्राणशक्तिरिति त्रयम्। सर्वासामेव शक्तीनां शक्तिमन्तो विनिर्मिता ।।13।।

jñānaśaktiḥ kriyāśaktiḥ prāṇaśaktiriti trayam /
sarvāsāmeva śaktīnāṃ śaktimanto vinirmitā //

[Now, Brahmā lists some of the great potentials, prowess and strengths of creation that the great Goddess has produced—].

'Jñāna Śakti' (the strength of knowledge and wisdom), 'Kriyā Śakti' (the strength of action and deeds, or the strength to perform deeds and take action), 'Prāṇa Śakti' (the stupendous ability and strength of Prāṇa, the vital wind force present inside the creature, or the ability to bear life and the powers associated with something that is alive) — these are called 'Triad of Śaktis'. All the Śaktis (powers, strength, potentials, vitalities, abilities and prowess) that exist in this creation as well those who possess this Śakti, both have been created or produced by you (13).

एका शक्तिः शिवोप्येकः शक्तिमानुच्यते शिवः। अभेदं चातुपश्यन्ति योगिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः ।।14।।

ekā śaktiḥ śivopyekaḥ śaktimānucyate śivaḥ /
abhedaṃ cātupaśyanti yoginastattvadarśinaḥ //

Essentially, the fundamental 'Śakti' is one (i.e. energy is one; it assumes various forms and names according to the use to which it is put, but the basic spirit and driving force is the same—such as we have electric, kinetic, sound, light, magnetic energies etc.). There is only one divine being to command this Śakti, and that is Lord Śiva. Yogīs (ascetics) who are well versed and expert in the basics of the essential knowledge do not regard any difference between the two of them (i.e. they don't see any duality between Śakti and Śiva) (14).

[Note :—(i) Science has established that energy changes its form, e.g. kinetic energy can be converted to heat energy, sound energy, electric energy and light energy. Similarly, electric energy can be converted to heat, sound, light and kinetic energies, and so on and so forth.

(ii) The word 'Śakti' has many connotations—e.g. (a) energy, strength, power, vitality, vigour, might, authority, push, potential etc.; (b) Goddess Pārvatī is the divine Goddess who is the consort of the great Lord of creation, Lord Śiva, and it is from her that all other Goddesses are said to have originated; hence she is also called the 'Mother of Creation' or 'Mother Goddess'; (c) the 'primordial primary cosmic energy' that sparked off the chain reaction that not only created the cosmos but still goes on powering its development and evolution until the time it would be dissolved back into its primary form. In essence, this energy would only change its form at the time of the conclusion of this phase of creation, when it would have fallen back and merged into its original, primary form. The energy will once again incite and activate the primordial cosmic jelly to restart the whole process once again. That is why the cycle of creation and destruction goes on endlessly because energy can only change its form but is never either decimated or completely annihilated; (d) Lord Śiva is the divine husband or Lord who wields authority over that stupendous Śakti that has manifested itself in the form of Pārvatī. The word 'Śiva' also means 'beautiful and truthful, auspicious and holy, enlightened and wise, erudite and sagacious, dispassionate and detached'. Hence, all that was truthful, beautiful, auspicious, strong, powerful and authoritative was represented in the form of Śiva who remains completely detached and indifferent to his own creation, being the supreme Ascetic, leaving the humdrum chores of its maintenance to his divine half, Pārvatī, who is also known by the name of 'Śakti'.]

शक्तयो जानकी देवी शक्तिमन्तो हि राघवः। विशेषः कथ्यते चायं पुराणे तत्त्ववादिभिः ।।15।।

śaktayo jānakī devī śaktimanto hi rāghavaḥ /
viśeṣaḥ kathyate cāyaṃ purāṇe tattvavādibhiḥ //

[Drawing a parallel with Śrī Rāma and Sītā, Brahmā said—] Jānakī Devī (Goddess Sītā) is 'Śakti' personified, while Śrī Rāma (Rāghava) is the authority who is the Lord of that Śakti (i.e. who commands that power and energy). Experts in the basics of the essential knowledge of this creation have specially emphasised this point in the Purāṇas (15).

[Note :—Brahmā has equated Sītā with mother Goddess of creation, i.e. Pārvatī, and Śrī Rāma with the Lord of Pārvatī, Lord Śiva, respectively. Or, Śrī Rāma with Virāṭ Puruṣa and Sītā with Mother Nature.]

भोग्या विश्वेश्वरी देवी रघूत्तमपतिव्रता। प्रोच्यते भगवान्भोक्ता रघुवंशविवर्द्धनः।।16।।

bhogyā viśveśvarī devī raghūttamapativratā /
procyate bhagavānbhoktā raghuvaṃśavivarddhanaḥ //

The Goddess of the world who is the loyal wife of the most exalted and excellent member of the Raghu's clan (i.e. Śrī Rāma), is regarded as 'Bhogya' (literally, one who is used by his Lord or who serves him; here referring to Sītā who serves Śrī Rāma in his worldly incarnation as well as in his divine comic form; Sītā acts as his assistant in carrying out the duty of sustenance and protection of the creation), while the Lord (Śrī Rāma) who enhances the glory and fame of Raghu's clan is the one who has the authority over her and is her unquestioned Lord (16).

मन्ता रामो मतिः सीता मन्तव्या च विचारतः। एकं सर्वगतं सूक्ष्मं कूटस्थमचलं ध्रुवम्।।17।।

mantā rāmo matiḥ sītā mantavyā ca vicārataḥ /
ekaṃ sarvagataṃ sūkṣmaṃ kūṭasthamacalaṃ dhruvam //

Sītā is 'Mati' (intellect, sense, understanding, thought, discrimination belief, desire, inclination, opinion, view—i.e. all the functions and activities of the mind and intellect), while Śrī Rāma is the 'authority' who has this 'Mati' (i.e. who is intelligent, wise, uses his commonsense, has understanding, erudition and wisdom, can think, analyse, discriminate and judge, has firm beliefs and convictions, has auspicious desires and inclinations, has firm opinion and views on any given subject). It is worthwhile to ponder and discuss on this subject thoughtfully, intelligently and wisely using logic, discrimination and powers to think rationally. They are one, inseparable and indistinguishable from one another; they are all-pervading, immanent and omnipresent; they are subtle and sublime; they are stable, unwavering, constant, steady, persistent and perpetual. This is an unquestioned, undisputed and an irrefutable fact (17).

योगिनस्तत्प्रपश्यन्ति तव देव्याः परं पदम्। अनन्तमजरं ब्रह्म केवलं निष्कलं परम्।।18।।

yoginastatprapaśyanti tava devyāḥ paraṃ padam /
anantamajaraṃ brahma kevalaṃ niṣkalaṃ param //

Oh Goddess! Yogīs (ascetics) are able to have a divine vision of your supreme abode. That supreme abode is synonymous with that of Brahma who is eternal, infinite and without an end, who does not decay as he is imperishable, who is one and the only one of his kind, who is without blemishes and faults of any kind, and who is the paramount, transcendental and Supreme Being who is beyond everything (18).

योगिनस्तत्प्रपश्यन्ति तव देव्याः परं पदम्। सा त्वं धात्रीव परमा आनन्दनिधिमिच्छताम्।।19।।

yoginastatprapaśyanti tava devyāḥ paraṃ padam/
sā tvaṃ dhātrīva paramā ānandanidhimicchatām//

Oh Goddess! Yogīs (ascetics) are able to have a divine glimpse of your supreme abode. Those who desire to attain that supreme abode of yours, which is a treasury of supreme beatitude and felicity, for them you are the great medium or path that can help them fulfill their dreams or wishes (and help them attain supreme bliss) (19).

संसारतापानखिलान्हरसीश्वरसंश्रयात्। नेदानीं भूतसंहारस्त्वया कार्यो महेश्वरी।।20।।

saṃsāratāpānakhilānharasīśvarasaṃśrayāt /
nedānīṃ bhūtasaṃhārastvayā kāryo maheśvarī//

In company of Īśvara (the supreme Lord) and making a joint effort with him, you eliminate or remove all the miseries, troubles and tribulations that torment and literally scorch and scald this world. Oh Maheśavarī (i.e. the divine consort of Lord Maheśvara, Śiva)! At this time, you should not annihilate the creation and its creatures (because you are their mother and protector, and not their tormentor and destroyer) (20).

रावणो सगणं हत्वा जगतां सुखमाहितम्। किं पुनर्नृत्यकलया जगत्संहियते त्वया।।21।।

rāvaṇo sagaṇaṃ hatvā jagatāṃ sukhamāhitam/
kiṃ punarnṛtyakalayā jagatsaṃhiyate tvayā//

By killing Rāvaṇa along with his subordinates and kith and kin, you have bestowed happiness and joy to the world. Now, why do you act to the contrary? Why do you dance madly in anger with a wish to annihilate the world ? [That is, on the one hand you have killed the evil fellows because they were tormenting the world and were hazardous for the creation, and now why do you wish to destroy that creation, which you have protected from the torments of the demons, yourself?]' (21)

एतच्छ्रुत्वाविशालाक्षी ब्रह्मणोऽभ्यर्थनं वचः। प्रीता सीता तदा प्राह ब्रह्माणं सहदैवतम्।।22।।

etacchrutvāviśālākṣī brahmaṇo'bhyarthanaṃ vacaḥ/
prītā sītā tadā prāha brahmāṇaṃ sahadaivatam//

When she (Sītā), who had large beautiful eyes, heard this prayer offered by Brahmā, she felt very pleased. She told Brahmā and other Gods—(22).

पतिर्मे पुण्डरीकाक्षः पुष्पकोपरि राघवः। विद्धः क्षुरप्रेण हृदि शेते मृतकवत्प्रभुः।।23।।
तस्मिन्नैव स्थिते देवाः किमिच्छामि जगद्धितम्। ग्रासमेकं करिष्यामि जगदेतच्चराचरम्।।24।।

patirme puṇḍarīkākṣaḥ puṣpakopari rāghavaḥ/
viddhaḥ kṣurapreṇa hṛdi śete mṛtakavatprabhuḥ//
tasminnaiva sthite devāḥ kimicchāmi jagaddhitam/
grāsamekaṃ kariṣyāmi jagadetaccarācaram//

'My husband, the lotus eyed Rāghava (Śrī Rāma), is lying on the Puṣpaka chariot-cum-plane wounded in his heart and unconscious. He has been hit and wounded with a sharp arrow (shot by Rāvaṇa) (23). Oh Gods! With him lying in such a precarious condition (on the verge of death), how can I be expected to think of the welfare and happiness of the rest of the world (when my own Lord is in such a miserable, pitiable and precarious condition)? I shall devour this whole creation, both the animate as well as the inanimate creatures, in one mouthful (or as one morsel of food). I will not spare this creation now' (24). [23-24]

श्रुत्वैतद्वचनं देव्याः संरम्भसहितं सुराः। हाहाकारं प्रचक्रुस्ते सञ्चचाल च मेदिनी।।25।।

śrutvaitadvacanaṃ devyāḥ saṃrambhasahitaṃ surāḥ/
hāhākāraṃ pracakruste sañcacāla ca medinī//

Brahmā, the creator, accompanied by all other Gods, touched Śrī Rāma who was lying unconscious on the Puṣpaka chariot with their hands and made him regain his consciousness and recover his memory (25).

ततो ब्रह्मा सुरैः सार्द्धं पुष्पकं रथमास्थितम्। श्रीरामं ग्राहयामास स्मृति स्पृष्ट्वा स्वपाणिना।।26।।

tato brahmā suraiḥ sārddhaṃ puṣpakaṃ rathamāsthitam/
śrīrāmaṃ grāhayāmāsa smṛti spṛṣṭvā svapāṇinā///

Brahmā, the creator, in the presence of all other Gods, touched Śrī Rāma, who was lying unconscious on the Puṣpaka chariot, with his hands and made him regain consciousness and recover his lost memory (26).

उत्तस्थौ च महाबाहू रामः कमललोचनः। रे रावण सुदुष्टत्वमद्य मद्बाणभेदितः।।27।।
द्रक्ष्यस्याशु यमस्यास्यं भ्रुकुटीभीषणाकृतिः। ब्रुवन्नैवं धनुर्गृह्य ह्यपश्यन्त्रिदशान्पुरः।।28।।

uttasthau ca mahābāhū rāmaḥ kamalalocanaḥ /
re rāvaṇa suduṣṭatvamadya madbāṇabheditaḥ //
drakṣyasyāśu yamasyāsyaṃ bhrukuṭībhīṣaṇākṛtiḥ /
bruvannaivaṃ dhanurgaṛhya hyapaśyantridaśānpuraḥ //

Immediately, the most brave, strong, powerful and potent lotus-eyed Śrī Rāma sat up. He called out, 'Oh you wicked Rāvaṇa ! You shall be now pierced by my arrows today (27), and sure enough, you shall see the horrifying face of Yama (the God of death) who has a most awe inspiring and terrifyingly crooked eyebrow (i.e. now you will face death and will see Yama standing in front of you when I shoot my arrow at you. The appearance of Yama with his fearful demeanours and horrifying countenance and scowling face would instill fear in your heart and make you tremble in terror and regret your fighting with me)'. Having uttered these defiant words, when Śrī Rāma raised the bow once again to shoot at Rāvaṇa, he saw the Gods standing in front of him instead of his enemy (28). [27-28]

नापश्यज्जानकीं तत्र प्राणेभ्योपि गरीयसीम्। नृत्यतीं चापरां कालीमपश्चच्च रणाङ्गणे।।29।।
चतुर्भुजां चलज्जिह्वां खड्गखर्परधारिणीम्। शवरूपमहादेवहृत्संस्थां च दिगम्बराम्।।30।।

nāpaśyajjānakīṃ tatra prāṇebhyopi garīyasīm /
nṛtyatīṃ cāparāṃ kālīmapaścacca raṇāṅgaṇe //
caturbhujāṃ calajjihvāṃ khaḍgakharparadhāriṇīm /
śavarūpamahādevahṛtsaṃsthāṃ ca digambarām //

He also did not see Jānakī (Sītā) who was more dear to him than his own life (literally, his own Prāṇa). Instead of her, he saw 'Mahākālī' (literally, the great black complexioned Goddess of death and destruction) dancing frantically and madly in the battlefield (29). She had four arms, her tongue was protruding and lapping violently, she held a fierce sword and a hollowed out skull in her hands, was naked, and was standing on the chest of Lord Mahādeva lying on the ground like a corpse. (See also verse no. 69 of canto 23). (30)[29-30]

पिबन्ती रुधिरं भीमां कोटराक्षीं क्षुधातुराम्। जगद्ग्रासे कृतोत्साहां मुण्डमालाविभूषणाम्।।31।।

pibantī rudhiraṃ bhīmāṃ koṭarākṣīṃ kṣudhāturām /
jagadgrāse kṛtotsāhāṃ muṇḍamālāvibhūṣaṇam //

He (Śrī Rāma) found that she (Mahākālī) was drinking blood, was colossus and awe inspiring in form, had hollow and ghostly eyes (like those of a skeleton), and appeared to be very hungry and eager to satisfy her hunger by devouring the whole world. She was adorned by a garland of skulls and severed heads (31).

भीमाकाराभिरन्याभिः क्रीडन्तीं रणमूर्द्धनि। मुण्डै राक्षसराजस्य खेलन्तीं कन्दुकं मुदा।।32।।

bhīmākārābhiranyābhiḥ krīḍantīṃ raṇamūrddhani /
muṇḍai rākṣasarājasya khelantīṃ kandukaṃ mudā //

She was playing in the battlefield along with her other colossus and most horrifying and terrorising companions who were like her. They joyously and cheerfully played the game of ball with the severed heads of the demon king (Rāvaṇa) (32).

[Note :—Rāvaṇa had a thousand heads. Therefore, there was no shortage of balls to play with in the battlefield.]

प्रलयध्वान्तधराभां सदा घर्घरनादिनीम्। अन्त्रमुण्डकरोट्यक्षकृतमालां चलत्मपदाम्।।33।।
कबन्धान्राक्षसानां च तया सह विनृत्यतः। रथवाजिगजानां च शकलानि व्यलोकयत्।।34।।

pralayadhvāntadharābhāṃ sadā ghargharanādinīm /
antramuṇḍakaroṭyakṣakṛtamālāṃ calatmapadām //
kabandhānrākṣasānāṃ ca tayā saha vinṛtyataḥ /
rathavājigajānāṃ ca śakalāni vyalokayat //

Creating a constant whirring, hissing, rustling and wheezing sound heard during the night that appears at the time of doomsday, wearing garlands made of intestines, skulls and severed heads and hands as well as the gouged out eyes of the warriors lying dead on the battlefield, kicking and stomping around violently and viciously (33), dancing with Kabandhas (torsos from which heads had been severed) of dead demons, Mahākālī roamed around the battlefield looking at the shattered remnants of war chariots, dead horses and fallen elephants (34). [33-34]

नैकोपि राक्षसो यत्र करपादशिरोयुतः। कबन्धा ये च नृत्यन्ति तेषां पादाः प्रतिष्ठिताः।।35।।

naikopi rākṣaso yatra karapādaśiroyutaḥ /
kabandhā ye ca nṛtyanti teṣāṃ pādāḥ pratiṣṭhitāḥ //

There was not single demon torso that had hands, legs or head left on it. Only those torsos that were dancing had legs to enable them to dance (35).

कबन्धं रावणस्यापि नृत्यन्तं च व्यलोकयत्। तदद्दृष्ट्वा सुमहाघोरं प्रेतराजपुरोपमम् ।। 36 ।।

kabandhaṃ rāvaṇasyāpi nṛtyantaṃ ca vyalokayat /
taddṛṣṭvā sumahāghoraṃ pretarājapuropamam //

He (Śrī Rāma) saw even the torso of Rāvaṇa dancing frantically (without the heads). The scenario appeared to resemble the most ghoulish, horrifying, bone chilling and hair raising sights observed in the capital city of the king of ghosts, phantoms, spirits and ogres (36).

कालीं च वीक्ष्य नृत्यन्तीं मातृभिः सहितां द्विज। पपात हस्ताद्रामस्य वेपताः सशरं धनुः ।।37।।

kālīṃ ca vīkṣya nṛtyantīṃ mātṛbhiḥ sahitāṃ dvija /
papāta hastādrāmasya vepatāḥ saśaraṃ dhanuḥ //

Oh Brāhmin (i.e. sage Bhāradvāja)! Watching Kali (the black Goddess of death) dancing in a mad trance-like state along with other female ghosts, vampires, ogres, phantoms and spirits of war in the battlefield, the bow and the arrow fell down on the ground from the shaking and trembling hands of the wonderstruck and apparently terrified Śrī Rāma (37).

भयाच्च निमिमीलाशुः रामः पद्मविलोचने। इत्येवं विस्मितं दृष्ट्वा ब्रह्मोवाच रघूत्तमम्।।38।।

bhayācca nimimīlāśuḥ rāmaḥ padmavilocane /
ityevaṃ vismitaṃ dṛṣṭvā brahmovāca raghūttamam //

Petrified with fear, Śrī Rāma shut tight his lotus-like eyes. Seeing the most exalted Rāghava, Śrī Rāma, full of consternation and perplexity, dazed and awestricken, the creator Brahmā averred reassuringly to him—(38).

त्वां दृष्ट्वा विह्वलं सीता क्रुद्धं चापि च रावणम्। रथादवस्कन्द्यसती पपात रणमूर्द्धनि।।39।।
भीमां च मूर्तिमालम्ब्य रोमकूपाश्च मातृकाः। निर्माय ताभिः सहिता हत्वा रावणमग्रतः ।।40।।

tvāṃ dṛṣṭvā vihvalaṃ sītā kruddhaṃ cāpi ca rāvaṇam /
rathādavaskandyasatī papāta raṇamūrddhani //
bhīmāṃ ca mūrtimālambya romakūpāśca mātṛkāḥ /
nirmāya tābhiḥ sahitā hatvā rāvaṇamagrataḥ //

'Observing that you are tormented and distressed beyond measure (when you were lying wounded and unconscious on the chariot at being shot by Rāvaṇa's arrow, as described in Canto 23, verse nos. 8-13) and that Rāvaṇa was becoming vehemently ferocious, belligerent, most unpredictable in his behaviour and exceedingly angry and wrathful, Sītā had immediately jumped down from the chariot on to the battlefield. She then assumed this most terrifying, horrifying, colossus and formidable form, produced all these female ogres, ghosts, phantoms and other female spirits from her own body hairs, and playing sport with them, she playfully, without even the least effort on her part, slayed the demon Rāvaṇa (39-40).

रक्षसां निधनं कृत्वा नृत्यन्तीयं व्यवस्थिता। अनया सहितो राम सृजस्यवसि हंसि च।।41।।

rakṣasāṃ nidhanaṃ kṛtvā nṛtyantīyaṃ vyavasthitā /
anayā sahito rāma sṛjasyavasi haṃsi ca //

Having slayed all the demons, she has now recovered herself sufficient enough to dance (in order to celebrate the occasion). Oh Śrī Rāma! In association with her, you produce and create, and at the appropriate time, you destroy this creation (41).

नानया रहितो राम किञ्चित्कर्तुमपि क्षमः। इति बोधयितुं सीता चकार तद निन्दिता।।42।।

nānayā rahito rāma kiñcitkartumapi kṣamaḥ /
iti bodhayituṃ sītā cakāra tada ninditā //

Oh Śrī Rāma! You cannot accomplish anything successfully without her help and association, or without involving her in your endeavours. It is just to prove the point to you and highlight this irrefutable truth and fact that she has done all this (42).

[Note :—From the point of view of Vedānta, Śrī Rāma represents the Virāṭ Puruṣa and Brahma, the supreme Being, while Sītā is a manifestation of Prakṛti or Mother Nature. Brahma does not do anything himself; he has delegated this 'doing' part to his Śakti which is his own cosmic energy and vitality revealed in the form of Prakṛti. To take an example from ordinary life, a king is the sovereign, but everything, every deed, every work of the kingdom is done by his chief ministers. It is done in his name, and for all practical purposes the king is responsible for all the actions taken by his administration represented by his ministers. But as is evident, the actual action are taken not by the king but by his ministers, and it often turns out that the chief ministers wield more power than the king himself. Also, it is often seen that the king not knows himself what is where in his kingdom. The latter virtually depends on his ministers.]

पश्यैतां जानकीं राम त्यज भीतिं महाभुज। निर्गुणां सगुणां साक्षात्सदसद्व्यक्तिवर्जिताम्।।43।।

paśyaitāṃ jānakīṃ rāma tyaja bhītiṃ mahābhuja /
nirguṇāṃ saguṇāṃ sākṣātsadasadvyaktivarjitām //

Oh Śrī Rāma who has most strong and valiant arms ! Abandon your despondency, consternation, perplexities, doubts and fears and have a look at Jānakī (Sītā). She embodies in her divine self the virtues of 'Nirguṇa' as well as 'Saguṇa' (i.e. she has a subtle, invisible form having no attributes but incorporating the stupendous powers or Śakti of Nature which controls the working of the entire cosmos, as well as a gross, visible form having attributes as is evident in a colossus and fearful form as Mahākālī, the great black Goddess of death, respectively). She is free from the notions of being either truthful or false (i.e. it is futile to debate whether the myriad manifestations of the divine cosmic energy are true or are simply an illusion created by delusions and ignorance, because she is beyond comprehension and cannot be subjected to any stereo type)' (43).

इत्येदद्रुहिणवचो निशम्य रामः श्रुतिमुखमात्महितं पराभिमर्दि।
शुचमनुविजहौ विचार्य किञ्चिज्जनक सुतामनुपश्यति स्म पश्चात्।।44।।

ityeddruhiṇavaco niśamya rāmaḥśrutimukhamātmahitaṃ parābhimardi /
śucamanuvijahau vicārya kiñcijjanaka sutāmanupaśyati sma paścāt //

Hearing these words of wise council from Brahmā, which were pleasing and reassuring for the ears of Śrī Rāma, which were endearing and uplifting for his Ātmā (or his heart), and which allayed all his fears arising out of his enemy, Śrī Rāma forsook fears, doubts, confusions and consternations of all kinds. Then on being reassured that the horrendous and most terrifying figure which he beheld in front of him in the battlefield and which had sent shivers down his spine, cuddling his blood and almost paralysing him into numbness, was no body else other than his own dear wife, Śrī Rāma looked again at the daughter of Janaka (Sītā) (44).

Thus ends Canto 24 of the ancient epic called Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa written by sage Vālmīki describing Śrī Rāma's revival, his terror at seeing Sītā in a ferocious, all annihilating, angry and formidable form as Mahākālī, and Brahmā enlightening him about the developments while he was lying unconscious, thereby reassuring Śrī Rāma and removing the fear of Mahākālī from his heart.

* * *

Canto 25

Śrī Rāma offers prayers and his obeisance to the great Goddess Mahākālī by using 1008 names as divine epithets or adjectives to honour and praise her

This is the largest and the most significant Canto of this version of the epic story of Rāmāyaṇa. When Śrī Rāma was assured by Brahmā that the ferocious form that he beheld in his front was none other than his own wife Sītā, Śrī Rāma felt a little comfortable. He slowly opened his eyes, bowed before the Goddess and then asked her who she was (verse no. 1-4). She introduced herself as the divine, supreme, transcendental, eternal, infinite and splendorous cosmic energy with matchless and stupendous strength, powers and potentials. She was the sublime and supreme Authority in creation (verse nos. 5-7). Then Śrī Rāma saw her 'Virāṭ', i.e. a huge, macrocosmic, all-encompassing, colossus and transcendental from as the great cosmic entity (verse nos. 8-15). Awed and dumb struck, he prayed to the cosmic Goddess, brimming over with devotion for her divine Being, by using various epithets as her different names which took the form of 'Stotras' or hymns offered to a deity in its praise and honour as a token of paying obeisance and honour to it as well as to adore and worship it. These Stotras present a spectacular canvas of metaphysical and spiritual concepts at one place. They are soaked in spiritualism and imbued with metaphysics. These consisted of 1008 Names; this figure of 1008 is an auspicious number. Each of these names describes one or the other glorious virtues and characteristics of the great Goddess (verse nos. 17-152). Finally, sage Vālmīki tells his disciple Bhāradvāja the benefits or rewards of reading, hearing and preaching these divine names, or invoking the grace of the great Goddess with the help of this Stotra (verse nos. 153-159).

It should be noticed here that this version of Rāmāyaṇa, called Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa, has laid great emphasis on the greatness and divinity of Sītā as the cosmic, transcendental, sublime and supreme Authority that enables righteousness to prevail over unrighteousness. It glorifies the 'Śakti' aspect of divinity that has enabled Brahma, the supreme entity here manifested as Śrī Rāma who had created this Śakti in the first place, to do what he wishes to do. Without that Śakti, Brahma is virtually disabled.

Another point is that sage Veda Vyāsa, the other ancient scholarly sage who has classified the Vedas and written the Purāṇas, has also highlighted the important role that 'Śakti' plays in the slaying of the 10-headed Rāvaṇa by describing how Goddess Durgā, the Goddess who rides a lion, had been instrumental in Śrī Rāma's success in killing the 10-headed demon king of Laṅkā. An English version of that version of Rāmāyaṇa as has been narrated by Veda Vyāsa in Devī Purāṇa has been published separately by this author. But this Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa is the most magnificent version of all the Rāmāyaṇas available in as much as that it presents the ordinary reader as well as the worshippers of the Goddess as Śakti with this beautiful sequences of verses called 'Stotra' as contained in this Canto, which is as much a piece of excellent Sanskrit literature as it is an exposition of Vedānta and metaphysics.

Another pertinent point is that Canto nos. 23, 25 and 26 radically alters the generally held notions of a woman in India—shy, docile, submissive, gentle, debonair, humble, subject to male domination, yielding, always at the receiving end of sorrows, miseries and torments, and subject to male chauvinism. It depicts a valiant, a courageous, a dare devil, a bold, a go-getting, a strong-willed and majestic womanhood that outshines the male in this world. It glorifies women and her potentials and raises her to a high pedestal of strength and valour quiet removed from a cowering, weeping and shrunk lady-in-distress picture that a woman is depicted as in tradition-bound ancient India.

ब्रह्मणो वचनं श्रुत्वा रामः कमललोचनः। प्रोन्मील्य शनकैरक्षि वेपमानो महाभुजः।।1।।
प्रणम्य शिरसा भूमौ तेजसा चापि विह्वलः। भीतः कृताञ्जलिपुटः प्रोवाच परमेश्वरीम्।।2।।

brahmaṇo vacanaṃ śrutvā rāmaḥ kamalalocanaḥ /
pronmīlya śanakairakṣi vepamāno mahābhujaḥ //
praṇamya śirasā bhūmau tejasā cāpi vihvalaḥ /
bhītaḥ kṛtāñjalipuṭaḥ provāca parameśvarīm //

Hearing the words of Brahmā, the creator, the brave, valiant and strong lotus-eyed Śrī Rāma slowly opened his eyes. Shaking out of shock and fear (1), he reverentially bowed before her (Goddess Mahākālī) by touching his head to the ground. He was petrified and awestruck by her 'Teja' (i.e. by her raging and burning anger, her ruthlessness, her relentless and uncompromising demeanours, her merciless stance and her ferocious countenance as well as the splendour, radiance and energy that was effusing from her body). He joined his hands like a scared and cowering person and addressed the supreme Goddess called Parameśvarī (2). [1-2]

का त्वं देवि विशालाक्षि शशांका वयवांकिते। न जाने त्वां महादेवी यथावद्ब्रूहि पृच्छते।।3।।

kā tvaṃ devi viśālākṣi śaśāṃkā vayavāṃkite/
na jāne tvāṃ mahādevī yathāvadbrūhi pṛcchate//

'You bear the mark or sign of a crescent moon (on your forehead) and have large, broad and beautiful eyes. Who are you? Oh great Goddess! We do not know about you. Hence, we request you to tell us about your truthful self ' (3).

रामस्य वचनं श्रुत्वा ततः सा परमेश्वरी। व्याजहार रघुव्याघ्रं योगिनामभयप्रदा।।4।।

rāmasya vacanaṃ śrutvā tataḥ sā parameśvarī/
vyājahāra raghuvyāghraṃ yogināmabhayapradā//

Hearing these words of Śrī Rāma spoken reverentially in humility, that supreme Goddess, who gives protection and bestows fearlessness to ascetics (Yogīs), replied to the lion of king Raghu's clan (i.e. Śrī Rāma)—(4).

मां विद्धि परमां शक्तिं महेश्वरसमाश्रयाम्। अनन्यामव्ययामेकां यां पश्यन्ति मुमुक्षवः।।5।।

māṃ viddhi paramāṃ śaktiṃ maheśvarasamāśrayām/
ananyāmavyayāmekāṃ yāṃ paśyanti mumukṣavaḥ//

'Treat me as, and be sure and convinced that, I am that stupendous, supreme, transcendental, sublime 'Śakti' (energy, powers, potentials, potent, prowess, majesty, glory, authority, strength and vitality) who (which) is under the command and authority of Lord Maheśvara (literally, the great God or Īśvara; here referring to Lord Śiva, and as a logical corollary, this Goddess, representing the vigorous, robust and irrepressible cosmic energy and powers, is Pārvatī, the divine consort of Śiva). I am endless, infinite, measureless and without any parameters and boundaries or limitations, and am imperishable and the one who is not subjected to decay, destruction and ruin—this is the subtle form of mine that is viewed and aimed at by those who are the seekers aspiring for 'Mokṣa' (i.e. emancipation and deliverance from this horrifying, artificial, entrapping mundane world) (5).

अहं वै सर्वभावानामात्मा सर्वान्तरा शिवा। शाश्वती सर्वविज्ञाना सर्वमूर्तिप्रवर्तिका।।6।।

ahaṃ vai sarvabhāvānāmātmā sarvāntarā śivā/
śāśvatī sarvavijñānā sarvamūrtipravartikā//

I am at the core of all 'Bhāvanās' or sentiments and emotions, all wishes, fancies, motives, desires and ideas. [That is, it is me who ignites these emotions and drive them in a creature.] I reside in the heart or the bosom or the inner-self of all as 'Śivā' (i.e. the Śakti aspect of Lord Śiva). [That is, I am that divine spark of life, the vitality and vigour that acts like a powerhouse that keeps the body and mind of a creature functioning properly in a righteous manner.] I am universal, eternal, infinite and the most primary aspect of creation. I am an embodiment of all wisdom, knowledge, erudition, sagacity, skills, expertise, scholarship and enlightenment, and am the one who produces, inspires, activates, impels and judges all the gross creation known as this world (6).

अनन्तानन्तमहिमा संसारार्णवतारिणी। दिव्यं ददामि ते चक्षुः पश्य मे पदमैश्वरम्।।7।।

anantānantamahimā saṃsārārṇavatāriṇī /
divyaṃ dadāmi te cakṣuḥ paśya me padamaiśvaram //

I am eternal and without an end. My glories, authority, majesty and potentials have no limits. I am the supreme Authority who can take one across the ocean represented by this world (i.e. I can provide him liberation from his tormenting shackles and provide deliverance to his soul). I am bestowing you with divine and sublime eyesight, i.e. I am giving you deep, penetrating and supernatural insight into the realm of the transcendental so that you can have a view of the magnificence and majesty of my glorious state' (7).

इत्युक्त्वा विररामैषा रामोऽपश्यच्च तत्पदम्। कोटिसूर्यप्रतीकाशं विश्वक्तेजोनिराकुलम्।।8।।

ityuktvā virarāmaiṣā rāmo'paśyacca tatpadam /
koṭisūryapratīkāśaṃ viśvaktejonirākulam //

After this, she fell silent. Śrī Rāma received the glorious insight provided by the Goddess and had the divine eyesight that enabled him to observe her glorious and majestic stature and form which was dazzling with the splendorous light that surrounded her from all the sides in an effervescent and fluorescent radiance like the one that effuses from a million Suns shining together (8).

ज्वालावलीसहस्राढ्यं कालानलशतोपमम्। दंष्ट्राकरालं दुर्घर्ष जटामण्डलमण्डितम्।।9।।

jvālāvalīsahasrāḍhyaṃ kālānalaśatopamam /
daṃṣṭrākarālaṃ durgharṣa jaṭāmaṇḍalamaṇḍitam //

Thousands of flaring flames leapt out from her and totally surrounded her from all the sides, and she appeared to be enveloped in a blinding ball of fire. That is, she appeared to be at the core of a brilliant ball of fire displaying blinding splendour and dazzle resembling a Sun. She appeared like the most formidable and terrifying personification of the doomsday Fire-God having sharp and ferocious teeth that protruded out from his mouth. The flames leaping out from her body had the intensity, potent and ferocity of hundreds of doomsday fires appearing at once. She looked most formidable, awe inspiring, horrifying and terrifying. She was adorned by a crown of a matted plait of tresses on her glorious head (9).

त्रिशूलवरहस्तं च घोररूपं भयावहम्। प्रशाम्यत्सौम्यवदनमनन्तैश्वर्यसंयुतम्।।10।।

triśūlavarahastaṃ ca ghorarūpaṃ bhayāvaham /
praśāmyatsaumyavadanamanantaiśvaryasaṃyutam //

Holding a trident in her hands, her form looked most horrifying and formidable to behold, and it invoked terror in the mind of the beholder. But, at the same time, it was calm, peaceful, serene and tranquil, most pleasant and gentle to look at, and was endowed with great and infinite glory, majesty and magnificence[1] (10).

[Note :—[1]It obviously appears to be contradictory on the face of it, but it isn't when one ponders on its subtle meaning. For those who are evil, sinful, pervert and wicked, the Goddess appears to be terrifying and fearful, while for those who are righteous, good, gentle and humble, she appears to be like a doting and lovable mother.]

चन्द्रावयवलक्ष्माढ्यं चन्द्रकोटिसमप्रभम्। किरीटिनं गदाहस्तं नूपुरैरुपशोभितम्।।11।।

candrāvayavalakṣmāḍhyaṃ candrakoṭisamaprabham /
kirīṭinaṃ gadāhastaṃ nūpurairupaśobhitam //

She had the divine marks of a crescent moon (on her forehead) and possessed the magnificence and glories of Lakṣmī. [That is, she had Lord Śiva as her adornment or was fortunate to have Śiva as her Lord, as represented by the crescent moon on her forehead, because this moon is a typical symbol of Lord Śiva being borne by him on his forehead. At the same time, she had the opulence and majesty that is associated with Goddess Lakṣmī who is the patron Goddess of wealth, prosperity and material well-being.] She resembled thousands of moons in her bright radiance. She wore a divine crown and a tiara, held a mace in her hands, and anklets adorned her features (11).

दिव्यमाल्याम्बरधरं दिव्यगन्धानुलेपनम्। शङ्खचक्रकरं काम्यं त्रिनेत्रं कृत्तिवाससम्।।12।।

divyamālyāmbaradharaṃ divyagandhānulepanam /
śaṅkhacakrakaraṃ kāmyaṃ trinetraṃ kṛttivāsasam //

She was wearing charming and magnificent garlands and clothes, had her body smeared by fragrant perfumes, held a conch and a cakra (a discus) in her hands, had three eyes (two normal eyes and the third subtle eye symbolising wisdom and deep insight located between the eyebrows), and she was wrapped in the hide of an animal (generally, a dear or lion skin used as a shawl or an overcoat to cover the body). She presented a very attractive and enchanting form (12).

अन्तःस्थं चाण्डबाह्यस्थं बाह्यरभ्यन्तरतःपरम्। सर्वशक्तिमयं शान्तं सर्वाकारं सनातनम्।।13।।

antaḥsthaṃ cāṇḍabāhyasthaṃ vāhyarabhyantarataḥparam /
sarvaśaktimayaṃ śāntaṃ sarvākāraṃ sanātanam //

She is present inside as well as outside the cosmos/universe and is even beyond these locations (i.e. she is omnipresent, immanent, all-pervading, all-permeating and all-encompassing in this creation). Her form was almighty but calm and peaceful. It was so magical that all possible forms that exist in this creation could be simultaneously seen in her single, individual form which is eternal, most ancient and universal (13).

ब्रह्मेन्द्रोपेन्द्रयोगीन्द्रैरीड्यमानपदाम्बुजम्। सर्वतः पाणिपादं तत्सर्वतेक्षिशिरोमुखम्।।14।।
सर्वमावृत्य तिष्ठन्तं ददर्श पदमैश्वरम्।। 14½।।

brahmendropendrayogīndrairīḍyamānapadāmbujam /
sarvataḥ pāṇipādaṃ tatsarvatekṣiśiromukham //
sarvamāvṛtya tiṣṭhantaṃ dadarśa padamaiśvaram /

Her lotus-like feet were being worshipped and honoured by Brahmā, Indra, Upendra (a deputy to Indra, the king of Gods) and Yogendra (those who are senior Yogīs or ascetic and hermits). It was fantastic that wherever Śrī Rāma looked at her, all parts of her divine and majestic body appeared to have feet and a head with eyes and mouth. [That is, wherever Śrī Rāma glanced at her colossus and vast form, he could see a small figure of the Goddess complete with a leg, a head and eyes. It was a most magical and out of the world experience for Śrī Rāma.] Her stupendous and magical form encompassed everything from all sides. Śrī Rāma had a holy sight of her divine, sublime, transcendental and supreme state of her existence that was equivalent to having a divine vision of the supreme Lord (i.e. Lord Śiva or Brahmā) of this creation (14-14½).

दृष्ट्वा च तादृशं रूपं दिव्यं माहेश्वरं पदम्।।15।।
तथैव च समाविष्टः स रामौ हृतमानसः। आत्मन्याधाय चात्मानमोङ्कारं समनुस्मरन्।।16।।

dṛṣṭvā ca tādṛśaṃ rūpaṃ divyaṃ māheśvaraṃ padam //
tathaiva ca samāviṣṭaḥ sa rāmau hṛtamānasaḥ /
ātmanyādhāya cātmānamoṅkāraṃ samanusmaran //

Observing this divine, sublime, subtle, transcendental and supreme state of 'Maheśvara' (literally, the great God; here referring to Śiva) (15), Śrī Rāma's heart was exhilarated and he was thrilled. He felt very glad and was overwhelmed by this sight which entered his heart and established itself firmly there (i.e. now Śrī Rāma felt a surge of devotion, reverence and affection for the divine Goddess whom he had feared and was terrified of a few moments ago). Experiencing oneness of his own Ātmā/soul with that divine Ātmā of the cosmos (as represented by the Virāṭ form of the Goddess), he contemplated a while upon 'Oṃkāra' or OM (which is a divine word representing the non-dual, sublime, transcendental, eclectic and supreme Brahma) in his heart. He invoked it reverentially and remembered the divine Brahma in her form (16). [15-16]

नाम्नामष्टसहस्रेण तुष्टाव परमेश्वरीम्। ॐ सीतोमा परमा शक्तिरनंता निष्कलामला।।17।।

nāmnāmaṣṭasahasreṇa tuṣṭāva parameśvarīm /
oṃ sītomā paramā śaktiranaṃtā niṣkalāmalā //

He used 1008 Names to praise, honour, worship, adore and pay tributes and his obeisance to the glories, majesty, magnificence, virtues, qualities and powers of the great and supreme Goddess in order to please her.

He prayed as follows—'OM salutations! Oh Goddess! You have the following divine names by which you are known and honoured. These are epithets that describe your stupendous and magnificent glory, majesty and honour. [1] Sītā, Umā (the divine consort of Śiva), Paramā (the supreme One), Śakti (energy, authority, powers and potentials of Mother Nature), Anantā (eternal, without an end, infinite), Niṣkalā (pure, pristine, uncorrupt), Amalā (one without any faults, blemishes and taints) (17).

शांता माहेश्वरी नित्या शाश्वती (10) परमाक्षरा।
अचिन्त्या केवलानंता शिवात्मा परमात्मिका।। 18।।
śāṃtā māheśvarī nityā śāśvatī (10) paramākṣarā /
acintyā kevalānaṃtā śivātmā paramātmikā //

Śāntā (peaceful and calm), [10] Maheśvarī (the divine consort of Lord Śiva who is called Maheśvara, the great God), Nityā (eternal, always present and universal), Śāśvatī (universal, infinite), Paramākṣarā (eternally imperishable as well as a personification of the supreme word called Praṇava representing Brahma), Acintyā (who is beyond thought and comprehension), Kevalā (the only one of her kind), Anantā (endless, infinite, without an end), Śivātmā (the soul or spirit or essence of Lord Śiva who represents beauty, auspiciousness, welfare, enlightenment, dispassion, detachment, bliss, peace and calm aspects of creation), Paramātmika (the supreme soul) (18).

अनादिरव्यया शुद्धा देवात्मा (20) सर्वगोचरा। एकानेकविभागस्था मायातीता सुनिर्मला।। 19।।
anādiravyayā śuddhā devātmā (20) sarvagocarā /
ekānekavibhāgasthā māyātītā · sunirmalā //

Anādi (without a beginning), Avyayā (without decay and getting diminished, not perishable), Śuddhā (pure, uncorrupt, undiluted, immaculate and pristine), [20] Devātmā (the transcendental divine Soul), Sarvagocarā (sees and perceives everything), Eka (one), Aneka (more than one, multifarious, myriad, various—i.e. the Goddess is one and indivisible, but at the same time she is present in all the myriad divisions and variations into which this whole creation is divided and classified into), Māyātīta (i.e. are beyond Māyā or delusions, illusions and ignorance), and Sunirmalā (very pure, immaculate, pristine and uncorrupt) (19).

महामाहेश्वरी शक्ता महादेवी निरञ्जना। काष्ठा (30) सर्वान्तरस्था च चिच्छक्तिरतिलालसा।।20।।
mahāmāheśvarī śaktā mahādevī nirañjanā /
kāṣṭhā (30) sarvāntarasthā ca cicchaktiratilālasā //

Mahā Maheśvarī (the great Goddess of all the Gods), Śaktā (strict, diligent, stringent, rigid, stern, unrelenting, uncompromising), Mahādevī (the great Goddess), Nirañjanā (pure, holy, invisible, faultless and without blemishes), [30] Kāṣṭhā (supreme, exalted, outer limit, parameter or boundary of anything, most high), Sarvāntrasthā (present in the bosom or heart of all), Cicchakti (the power of desires originating in the mind), Atilālasā (to have infaṭuating greed, yearning, aspirations, desires, rapacity etc.) (20).

जानकी मिथिलानन्दा राक्षसान्तविधायिनी। रावणान्तरकरी रम्या रामवक्षःस्थलालया।।21।।
jānakī mithilānandā rākṣasāntavidhāyinī /
rāvaṇāntarakarī ramyā rāmavakṣaḥsthalālayā //

Jānakī (the daughter of Janaka), who gives happiness to the citizens of Mithilā (her birth place, also called Janakapura), who is the annihilator or destroyer of demons (representing the evil and wicked forces of the world), who has brought an end of Rāvaṇa (the king of demons), who is most sweet and pleasant, and who resides in the heart of Śrī Rāma because she is very dear to him (21).

उमा सर्वात्मिका (40) विद्या ज्योतिरूपाऽयुताक्षरो। शान्ति प्रतिष्ठा सर्वेषां निवृत्तिरमृपदा।। 22।।
umā sarvātmikā (40) vidyā jyotirūpā'yutākṣaro /
śānti pratiṣṭhā sarveṣāṃ nivṛttiramṛpadā //

Umā (another name of Pārvatī, the consort of Lord Śiva), [40] Sarvātmikā (i.e. the one who resides as the Ātmā or soul of all), Vidyā (knowledge, learning, erudition, sagacity, skill and expertise), Jyoti (a personification of light), Ayutākṣarī (to be equivalent to 10,000 divine words OM; to be 10,000 time more imperishable than those entities that are by themselves imperishable), Śānti (peaceful, calm, tranquil and serene), Pratiṣṭhā (the foundation upon which everything rests, finds succour and sustenance; the word also means dignity, honour, fame and majesty), Sarveṣām (supreme, all in all), Nivṛtti (liberation, freedom, deliverance), the one who can give Amṛta (the ambrosia of eternity and bliss) (22).

[Note :— The word Ayuta means 10000, and Akṣara means that which is imperishable as well as the divine word OM.]

व्योममूर्तिर्व्योममयी व्योमधारा (50) ऽच्युतालता। अनादिनिधना योषा कारणात्मा कलाकुला।। 23।।
vyomamūrtirvyomamayī vyomadhārā(50)'cyutālatā /
anādinidhanā yoṣā kāraṇātmā kalākulā //

You are a personification of Vyoma (the vast, fathomless, measureless sky that is pure, uncorrupt, all-pervading, all-encompassing by nature), you pervade the entire sky or Vyomā as well as you bear it (space or sky) [50]. You cannot be degraded, corrupted, tarnished and pulled down from you exalted stature (i.e. you are Acyutā); you are beautiful and tender like a creeper (you are called Latā); you are without a beginning or end (Anādi Nidhāna); you are known as Yoṣā (a chaste woman/lady), Kāraṇa Ātmā (the primary cause of anything; the causal body where the Ātmā or pure consciousness lives), Kalākulā (an expert in art and craft of anything, called Kalā, as well as are an embodiment of brilliance, splendour and grandeur, called Kula) (23).

[Note :—That is, you are like the sky having all the virtues and characteristic features of it, but at the same time, this element of the sky, which is one of the 5 basic elements of creation, is only a part or fraction of your whole self. See also verse no. 82 and 152.]

नन्दप्रथमजा नाभिरमृतस्यान्तसंश्रया। प्राणेश्वरप्रिया (60) मातामही महिषवाहना।।24।।

nandaprathamajā nābhiramṛtasyāntasaṃśrayā /
prāṇeśvarapriyā (60) mātāmahī mahiṣavāhanā //

You are the one who was born in the household of Nanda (during the incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu as Śrī Kṛṣṇa); you are like the ambrosia present in the navel of a creature; [60] you are the beloved one of the Lord who is the Prāṇa of a creature (i.e. you are the dear wife of Lord Śrī Rāma who is like the soul and life of a creature), are the grandmother (Mātāmahī) of the entire creation (much like the creator Brahmā who is the grandfather of this creation); and you ride a buffalo (hence you are called Mahiṣavāhinī) (24).

[Note :—An embryo derives its nutrition from the mother through the placenta attached to its navel. After the child is born, this placenta is incised. So, the location of the navel is regarded as the pitcher of Amṛta or ambrosia which gives sustenance to the creature while it is lying unable to do anything itself in the womb of its mother. It is the navel from where the creature derives its nourishment during its nascent phases of development. Further, according to Upaniṣads dealing with Yoga, this navel is the location of the Sun Cakra from where the body gets its energy. The sun is a metaphor for light and energy that drives this creation. So the Goddess also represents the stupendous powers of the sun.

Prāṇa is a synonym for life; it is also used for Ātmā or soul of the creature. Brahma is the supreme Lord who resides as the soul in the heart of the creature. Śrī Rāma is an incarnation of that Brahma; Sītā is the wife of Śrī Rāma. Hence, this phrase refers to Sītā who is the wife of Śrī Rāma who is the Lord of the creatures and who resides in their hearts as their life infusing Prāṇa. This Prāṇa is a representative of Brahma. Therefore Śrī Rāma is also a representative of Brahma. And since Brahma uses his divine powers to regulate this creation, from the very beginning of it to the very end, Sītā too represents that divine, supreme, subtle and sublime Śakti of Brahma.

At the macro level, the Goddess Mahākālī represents Mother Nature from whose womb the creation has emerged, and from which mother it derives its sustenance, protection, development and wellbeing. So, if Brahmā the creator is the grandfather of creation, Mother Nature is surely the grandmother !]

प्राणेश्वरी प्राणरूपा प्रधानपुरुषेश्वरी।
सर्वशक्तिः कला काष्ठा ज्योत्स्नेन्दो (70) र्महिमास्पदा।।25।।
prāṇeśvarī prāṇarūpā pradhānapuruṣeśvarī /
sarvaśaktiḥ kalā kāṣṭhā jyotsnendo(70)rmahimāspadā //

You are known as Prāṇeśvarī, the patron Goddess of Prāṇa (the spark of life in a creature); you are Prāṇarūpā (i.e. a personification of that Prāṇa); you are Pradhāna (i.e. the chief authority); you are the Puruṣeśvarī (i.e. you are the Goddess of the macrocosmic Virāṭ Puruṣa; you are the cosmic, macrocosmic, divine and supreme Goddess who is even worshipped and adored by the Supreme Being called Parameśvara; you are his divine consort); you are Sarvaśakti (all powerful and almighty); you are an embodiment of Kalā (i.e. you possess all art, skill and expertise, and you can use these qualities with authority; they are at your command—see also verse no. 23); you are Kāṣṭhā (i.e. you represent the outer limit, parameter or boundary of everything; you are most exalted, supreme and high—see also verse no. 20), [70] you are known as Candra Jyotsanā (i.e. you are brilliant, shining, radiant and glorious like the full moon); and you are a fount of Mahimā (i.e. you possess the virtues of glory, majesty, fame, dignity, all the powers and grandeurs in creation, and these virtues have their origin in you) (25).

सर्वकार्यनियन्त्री च सर्वभूतेश्वरेश्वरी। अनादिरव्यक्तगुणा महानन्दा सनातनी।।26।।
sarvakāryaniyantrī ca sarvabhūteśvareśvarī /
anādiravyaktaguṇā mahānandā sanātanī //

You are the controlling authority of all action and deeds; you are the supreme Goddess of all the Bhūtas (creatures); you are eternal and without a beginning (i.e. you are known as Anādi); you are invisible, subtle, unmanifest, attributeless and without any definitions; you are an embodiment of great beatitude and felicity; and you are ancient, eternal and universal (26).

आकाशयोनिर्योगस्था सर्वयोगेश्वरेश्वरी (80)। शवासना चितान्तःस्था महेशी वृषवाहना।।27।।

ākāśayoniryogasthā sarvayogeśvareśvarī (80) /
śavāsanā citāntaḥsthā maheśī vṛṣavāhanā //

Your divine and holy womb in which the whole creation was conceived is as vast, as spotless, as immaculate, as uncorrupt and as subtle as the sky. You remain in an eternal meditative posture of Yoga (i.e. you are perpetually, constantly and consistently engrossed in deep meditation and are submerged in your pure conscious like an enlightened ascetic). [80] You are the patron Goddess and the Lord of all great ascetics (Yogīs—see also verse no. 90). You sit on a corpse (in the cremation ground while meditating—see verse no. 145 also). You contemplate and deeply focus upon the pure self which is pure consciousness. You are a divine consort of Lord Śiva, and you sit on a buffalo (27).

[Note :—The sky is the space of the cosmos in which the entire creation exists; it is conceived there, develops there, is sustained and nourished there, and it ends there. The sky is pristine pure in itself and it incorporates everything that exists. Therefore, it is equivalent to the divine womb of Mother Nature.]

बालिकातरुणी वृद्धा वृद्धमाता जरातुरा। महामाया (90) सुदुष्पूरा मूलप्रकृतिरीश्वरी।।28।।

bālikātaruṇī vṛddhā vṛddhamātā jarāturā /
mahāmāyā (90) suduṣpūrā mūlaprakṛtirīśvarī //

You are Bālikā (a girl child), a Taruṇī (a youthful lady), Vṛddha (an old woman), Vṛddha Mātā (an old mother), and Jarāturā (beyond old age; old age does not touch you because you always remain youthful). [90] You are Mahā Māyā (the great delusionary and cosmic power or Mother Nature and creation), you are Sudūṣpurā (a resident of a far away place, i.e. the heavens), you are Mūla Prakṛti (the primary Nature), and you are Īśvarī (the great Goddess) (28).

संसारयोनिःसकला सर्वशक्तिसमुद्भवा। संसारसारा दुर्वारा दुर्निरीक्ष्यादुरासदा (100)।।29।।

saṃsārayoniḥsakalā sarvaśaktisamudbhavā /
saṃsārasārā durvārā durnirīkṣyādurāsadā (100) //

You are the divine womb in which this world was conceived. You are an embodiment of everything that there is (i.e. you are called Sakalā). You are almighty and have been born by the conjunction of all the stupendous, magnificent and most marvelous powers and potentials present in creation. You are the essence of the entire world. You are difficult to handle or tackle (i.e. you are beyond the powers of anyone to deal with). You are visible with the greatest of difficulties. [100] You are unimaginable, beyond meaning and the purview of the senses, and are without an end (29).

प्राणशक्तिः प्राणविद्यायोगिनीपरमा कला। महाविभूतिर्दुर्घर्षा मूलप्रकृतिसम्भवा।।30।।
prāṇaśaktiḥ prāṇavidyāyoginīparamā kalā /
mahāvibhūtirdurgharṣā mūlaprakṛtisambhavā //

You are the magnificent subtle power and vitality as well as the stupendous force and energy of Prāṇa (the life infusing spark of creation). That is why you are called Prāṇa Śakti. You are expert in the science and knowledge that deals with Prāṇa, called Prāṇa Vidyā. You are a Yoginī (a female ascetic), a Parama (supreme, transcendental and most exalted female entity), a Kalā (artful, skillful, brilliant and grand), a great Vibhūti (one who is excellent, glorious, majestic, dignified, prosperous and possesses magnificent virtues and is an asset for the world), a Durgharṣā (most formidable, indomitable, difficult, invincible, unrelenting, daunting and insuppressible), and are born from the primary, primordial Nature of creation, called the Mūla Prakṛti (30).

अनाद्यनन्तविभवा परात्मा पुरुषो बली (110)। सर्गस्थित्यन्तकरणी सुदुर्वाच्या दुरत्यया।।31।।
anādyanantavibhavā parātmā puruṣo balī (110) /
sargasthityantakaraṇī sudurvācyā duratyayā //

You are without a beginning and an end (i.e. you are infinite, measureless and endless); you are majestic, glorious and famous; you are the Supreme Soul of creation called Parmātmā; you are Puruṣa (the primary male aspects of creation; the Virāṭ Puruṣa); [110] you are known as Vālī (most strong, powerful, potent and authoritative); you are the one who establishes and ends the world; you are the one who cannot be described; you are the one who does not die or decay, and are faultless and without any tarnishes or blemishes (31).

शब्दयोनिश्शब्दमयी नादाख्या नादविग्रहा। प्रधानपुरुषातीता प्रधानपुरुषात्मिका।।32।।

śabdayoniśśabdamayī nādākhyā nādavigrahā /
pradhānapuruṣātītā pradhānapuruṣātmikā //

You have been born out of the divine 'word' and, at the same time, are an embodiment and personification of that divine word (which is OM). Your another name is 'Nāda' (the cosmic vibration of sound) and you are an image, a personification and an embodiment of that Nāda (see also verse no. 119). You are beyond the definition of the chief Puruṣa (who is also known as the Virāṭ Puruṣa who is the macrocosmic primary Lord of creation), and at same time you are a personification of that chief Puruṣa (32).

पुराणी (120) चिन्मयी पुंसामादिः पुरुषरूपिणी। भूतान्तरात्मा कूटस्था महापुरुषसंज्ञिता।।33।।

purāṇī (120) cinmayī puṃsāmādiḥ puruṣarupiṇī /
bhūtāntarātmā kūṭasthā mahāpurūṣasaṃjñitā //

[120] You are ancient and lauded by the Purāṇas. You are enlightened pure consciousness. You are the primary and ancient supreme Male aspect of creation as well as a manifestation of that Male. [Here, the Male represents the Virāṭ Puruṣa or the Supreme Being of this creation from whom 'Śakti' or Mother Nature emerged.] You are the Ātmā (soul/spirit) that resides in the heart/bosom of all creatures. One of your glorious titles is 'Mahā Puruṣa' (meaning the great Soul or the exalted one) (33).

जन्ममृत्युजरातीता सर्वशक्तिसमन्विता। व्यापिनी चानवच्छिन्ना (130) प्रधाना सुप्रवेशिनी।।34।।

janmamṛtyujarātītā sarvaśaktisamanvitā /
vyāpinī cānavacchinnā (130) pradhānā supraveśinī //

You are beyond the purview of birth, death and decrepit old age. [That is, you are eternal and always healthy; you never take a birth nor die or become old because these are the characteristic features of a mortal world, but you are immortal.] You are omnipotent and almighty, all-pervading, omnipresent and immanent. [130] You are immutable, indivisible, non-partitionable and non fractionable. You are the one who has access to (or literally can enter) the private chambers (abodes) of the chief Authority of creation (i.e. you are the divine consort of the Supreme Being who is the Lord of all creation and its chief authority. Being his divine consort, you have free access to his abode in the heavens. You are close to him) (34).

क्षेत्रज्ञा शक्तिरव्यक्तलक्षणा मलवर्जिता। अनादिमायासम्भिन्ना त्रितत्वा प्रकृतिर्गुणः (140)।।35।।
kṣetrajñā śaktiravyaktalakṣaṇā malavarjitā /
anādimāyāsambhinnā tritatvā prakṛtirguṇaḥ (140) //

You have a complete and comprehensive knowledge of the entire realm of the creation and have a sway over it. You are possessed of Śakti (divine powers, potentials, strengths and authority) as well as the virtues and attributes which are imperceptible and invisible for the common eye. You are devoid of all the faults, flaws, shortcomings and other negative traits that are associated with this mortal creation. You are without a beginning, are distinct from Māyā which is the ancient and traditional delusionary aspect of creation creating deception and having its origin in ignorance about the essential truth that has engulfed the entire creation, though it is associated with you (because the very existence of this creation is because of the delusionary Māyā factor created and represented by you). [That is, Māyā has been created by you and it is also associated with you who are enlightened and wise and are supposed to remove Māyā from the world, but in order to start this process of creation and perpetuate it, you deemed it necessary to retain this Māyā factor with you. Otherwise, if this Māyā was not there, the entire creation would have realised the essential truth that whatever is visible is falsehood and the entire world is perishable and mortal, and therefore it is futile to pursue it and remain engrossed in it. Hence, all the creatures would have become renunciate and dispassionate towards this illusionary world, would have become perfect ascetics and renunciates, and the whole process of creation would have come to a grinding halt.] You represent Tritattva, i.e. you are possessed of all the three basic ingredients that constitute this Māyā. You are manifested as Prakṛti (Mother Nature and its qualities, virtues and characteristic features). [That is, Mother Nature is a manifestation of your stupendous glory, and all the magnificent features that Nature possesses are actually your own magnificent features revealed in the form of Nature.] (35)

[Note :— Māyā is a word which has two parts, Ma + Ya. The first half has a negative connotation. 'Ma' means 'to measure, mark off, by any standard; to show, to exhibit, to display; to infer, to conclude; to be formed, built, made of', while the second part 'Ya' means 'this or that'. 'Ma' has a negative connotation. Therefore, the composite word Māyā means neither this nor that; anything that is not real; that which is delusionary, illusionary, deceptive, mirage like and deceitful, and is caused by the ignorance about its truth and reality; something that has no substance or pith; displays no certainty and leads to wrong inference. The term Māyā is used to define all these phenomenons. Hence, Māyā is a synonym used for all that is deceptive, faulty, false, deluding, ignorance based, illusionary, impostering, deceitful, invisible and parā-natural; all that which has no reality or substance; all that is hollow. It creates hallucinations in a creature's mind leading him to believe that what he sees is the truth.

Māyā has three basic constituent qualities. Hence it is called 'Triguṇamayī', i.e. one which has the three Guṇas or qualities. These three Guṇas or qualities are— Sat, Raja and Tama. 'Sat' is the most auspicious, virtuous and noblest quality in a man and raises him to a high moral and spiritual pedestal. It marks predominance of righteousness and the highest standards of spirituals and mental evolvement leading to high thoughts, noble actions and righteous behaviour. 'Raja' is the medium quality in a person, and it is marked by worldly passions, desires, yearnings and greed. It makes a man more worldly than spiritual. 'Tama' is the third and most lowly of the three qualities and is used has a synonym for darkness and evil. Obviously, 'Tama' means ignorance, delusions and all the forces or qualities that are evil, mean, lowly, miserly, wicked and base. They pull down a man from high pedestal and virtually dump him in the dust yard of creation to rust and decay.

These three qualities together, in various permutations and combinations, decide the innate nature of a man. The greater presence of 'Sat' makes a man nobler as compared to a high ratio of 'Tama' which makes him wicked, pervert and evil. Various proportions of these qualities will therefore produce innumerable varieties of creatures having different temperaments, thought processes, behaviours, demeanours and mental setup in this world.]

महामाया समुत्पन्ना तामसी पौरुषं ध्रुवा। व्यक्ताव्यक्तात्मिका कृष्णा रक्तशुक्लाप्रसूतिका ।।36।।

mahāmāyā samutpannā tāmasī pauruṣaṃ dhruvā/
vyaktāvyaktātmikā kṛṣṇā raktaśuklāprasūtikā//

You are Mahā Māyā (i.e. the great, magnificent and stupendous maverick force of creation that has created delusions and ignorance and is the moving force of the world of artificiality). This whole creation has been produced by you (or you have created it) and it possesses this Māyā as its inseparable part, making you appear to be possessed of these negative traits called Tāmasī (such as your present demeanours, countenance, attire, tendencies and your general state in this battlefield). But, at the same time, you have steady and unwavering strength, vigour, vitality, valour, potentials, potent, push, punch and diligence (which are not possible for any ordinary mortal being who is under the influence Māyā). You are manifest as well as un-manifest; you are with attributes as well as without them; you are visible as well as invisible. You are Kṛṣṇa (dark complexioned Goddess) and are the mother who produces both the blood as well as the white sperm (or semen) (36).

[Note :— That is, you represent that divine force which creates both the female creative powers as well as the male creative power in the universe. In other words, you represent that divine macrocosmic Mother Nature in whose womb this entire creation was conceived as well as the female creature symbolised by the menstrual flow of blood; at the same time, you represent the Virāṭ Puruṣa or Brahma, the creator, who had injected the cosmic sperm into Mother Nature in order to provide her with the divine spark initiating the process of creation, and at the micro level you symbolise the white semen present in a male creature.]

स्वकार्या (150) कार्यजननी ब्रह्मास्या ब्रह्मसंश्रया।
व्यक्ता प्रथमजा ब्राह्मी महती ज्ञानरूपिणी।। 37।।
svakāryā (150) kāryajananī brahmāsyā brahmasaṃśrayā /
vyaktā prathamajā brāhmī mahatī jñānarūpiṇī //

[150] You do everything yourself (without any help or advice). You are the mother who has created the work that is needed to be done in the world (i.e. you are the cause of all the work that needs attention by a creature, and at the same time you do the work yourself, though the creature thinks erroneously that it is he who does it). You are the creator Brahmā in this aspect (because you not only create something but also take care of its fulfillment) as well as Brahma (the primary supreme Authority from whom even Brahmā was created). [That is, even as Brahmā creates the world, you too create it along with the different works that the creature does in this world, and in the form of Brahma you do these works yourself even as the supreme, transcendental, sublime and subtle authority, who is the driving forces of this creation and who has created Brahmā himself in the first place, does them, albeit subtly, imperceptible, from behind the curtain, as it were; in the form of the Ātmā residing in the bosom of the creature who erroneously thinks that he, the creature with a mortal and gross body, does that work.]

You are manifested (Vyakta), the first born (i.e. most ancient, the first manifestation of Brahma, the primary force of nature, called Mother Nature, from whom the rest of the creation has unfolded), Brahmai (the female counterpart of the creator Brahmā), Mahāti (one who is great, famed, majestic, magnificent, marvelous and glorious), and are an embodiment Jñāna (truthful knowledge, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment) (37).

वैराग्यैश्वर्यधर्मात्मा ब्रह्ममूर्ति (160) हृदिस्थिता। जयदा जित्वरी जैत्री जयश्रीर्जयशालिनी।।38।।

vairāgyaiśvaryadharmātmā brahmamūrti (160) rhṛdisthitā /
jayadā jitvarī jaitrī jayaśrīrjayaśālinī //

You are a personification of Vairāgya (renunciation, detachment and dispassion towards this world) as well as Aiśvarya (fame, majesty, glory, magnificence, authority). You are Dharmātmā (one who is righteous, noble and virtuous). [160] You are an image of Brahmā established in one's heart (as the Ātmā). You are a bestower of victory. You can vanquish and conquer everyone and everything soon, without any delay. You are Jaitrī (one who can conquer the three worlds, e.g. the nether, the subterranean and the celestial). You are Jailakṣmī (the great Goddess of wealth, prosperity and wellbeing who provides victory to those on whom she is benevolent; the word also means the honours that come to a person who gets victory over his enemies and adversaries; victory is a kind of an asset and a cause of honour and respect in the society, hence it is treated as being equivalent to Lakṣmī representing wealth, prosperity and asset). You are endowed with or possess the virtue of being victorious everywhere. [In other words, victory comes to you naturally; its an integral aspect of your virtues and potentials. The word 'Jailakṣmī' and 'Jaitrī' in the last line of the verse also refer to the glory, fame, majesty, pomp, pageant and circumstance that come as an accoutrement of victory and conquest, and these are easily available to you.] (38)

सुखदा शुभदा सत्या शुभा (170) संक्षोभकारिणी।
अपां योनिः स्वयम्भूतिर्मानसी तत्त्वसम्भवा।।39।।

sukhadā śubhadā satyā śubhā (170) saṃkṣobhakāriṇī /
apāṃ yoniḥ svayambhūtirmānasī tattvasambhavā //

Your other names which indicate your different glorious and majestic virtues are the following—Sukhadā (one who gives pleasure, comfort, happiness and joy), Śubhdā (one who gives auspiciousness and welfare), Satyā (one who is truthful), [170] and Śubhā (one who is auspicious and a herald of goodness). You cause one to be restless, active and agile. You are manifested as 'water' which is the basic element of creation and the basic breeding ground for it, for without water no creature can either come into being or survive, thus providing it with the conducive environment to breed and then sustain the procreation which results from such breeding. You have manifested yourself out of your own free will. You have come into existence in your present form as Mahākālī because your mind decided to do so. This is a basic fact and the primary factor which has made your present manifestation as Mahākālī possible. [That is, you have manifested in your present form as the ferocious, formidable, fearsome looking and awe inspiring Goddess in the battlefield because you have decided to do so yourself. Otherwise, you have always been present in your docile, charming, calm, benevolent, merciful and sweet form as Sītā, and you could have killed these demons merely by your wish instead of having to assume your present form of Mahākālī.] (39)

ईश्वराणी च सर्वाणी शंकरार्द्धशरीरिणी।
भवानी चैव रुद्राणी (180) महालक्ष्मीरथाम्बिका।।40।।
īśvarāṇī ca sarvāṇī śaṃkarārddhaśarīriṇī /
bhavānī caiva rudrāṇī (180) mahālakṣmīrathāmbikā //

You are the supreme Goddess called Īśvarāṇī. You are the supreme Authority vested with the all encompassing supreme powers over the whole creation. You form the one half (i.e. the left half) of the divine cosmic body of Lord Śiva (see also verse no. 42), and are also known as Bhavānī (which is another name for Pārvatī, the divine consort of Lord Śiva), [180] Rudrāṇī (the divine consort of Rudra, the angry manifestation of Śiva), Mahā Lakṣmī (the great Goddess of wealth and prosperity who is the divine consort Lord Viṣṇu, the sustainer and protector of the creation), and Ambikā (the divine mother) (40).

माहेश्वरी समुत्पन्ना भुक्तिमुक्तिफलप्रदा। सर्वेश्वरी सर्ववर्णा नित्या मुदितमानसा।।41।।
māheśvarī samutpannā bhuktimuktiphalapradā /
sarveśvarī sarvavarṇā nityā muditamānasā //

You are Maheśvarī (literally, the great Goddess who is a divine consort of Maheśvara or Lord Śiva who is also the great and superior God amongst all the Gods) who reveals herself when the need arises.

You are the one who enjoys this world, and are the one who bestows the reward or boon of 'Mukti' (i.e. liberation and deliverance, emancipation and salvation) from this world to your devotees (see also verse nos. 107 and 115). You are the Lord and Mistress of all that exists. You are an image of the entire creation, including all its classes, sections, castes and creeds as well as all the myriad and various forms of its creatures of different shapes, sizes, hues and contours. You are eternal and infinite. You have a cheerful heart and mind (41).

ब्रह्मेन्द्रोपेन्द्रनमिता शंकरेच्छानुवर्तिनी (190)। ईश्वरार्द्धासनगता रघूत्तमपतिव्रता।।42।।
brahmendropendranamitā śaṃkarecchānuvartinī (190) /
īśvarārddhāsanagatā raghūttamapativratā //

Even Brahmā (the creator), Indra (king of Gods) and Upendra (the assistant of Indra) bow reverentially before you to pay their respects. [190] You carryout the wishes of Lord Śiva. You have the honour of occupying one half of the exalted seat of Lord God called Īśvara (i.e. Supreme Being) as his macrocosmic counterpart called Mother Nature or Prakṛti (see also verse no. 40) which has revealed itself as Sītā who is the loyal and chaste wife of the most exalted and the most excellent member of the Raghu's clan (i.e. Śrī Rāma) (42).

[Note :—Even a cursory reading of the text shows that the supreme Goddess is treated as both the male and the female aspects of creation (see verse nos. 31-33, 36-37), as the macrocosmic divine consort of Śiva, Viṣṇu and Brahmā simultaneously as well as the microcosmic form of hers as Sītā who is the wife of Śrī Rāma (see verse no. 42). Śrī Rāma, in essence, is a manifestation of Brahma, and this Brahma encompasses not only all the three trinity Gods but also the rest of the creation. Similarly, Sītā also encompasses the entire Śakti aspect of creation which is the divine energy, power and strength relying upon which Brahma had created, sustains and would annihilate the world in its final moments (see verse no. 35). That is why this Canto is regarded as the metaphysical interpretation of the story of Rāmāyaṇa which especially highlights the divine aspect of Sītā as the macrocosmic Mother Nature manifested in her microcosmic body.]

सकृद्विभाविता सर्वा समुद्रपरिशोषिणी। पार्वती हिमवत्पुत्री परमानन्ददायिनी।।43।।
sakṛdvibhāvitā sarvā samudrapariśoṣiṇī /
pārvatī himavatputrī paramānandadāyinī //

You think about the welfare and wellbeing of all at once. You can oppress (i.e. control, put under leash or dry up) the ocean (which is generally regarded as most unconquerable, indomitable and fearless). You are known as Pārvatī (the divine consort of Śiva) who was the daughter of Himavān (the snow capped Himālayas personified—see verse nos. 115 and 132)) and who bestows supreme bliss and beatitude, joy and felicity upon your devotees (43).

गुणाढ्या योगदा (200) योग्या ज्ञानमूर्तिर्विकाशिनी।
सावित्री कमला लक्ष्मीश्रीरनन्तोरसि स्थिता।। 44।।
guṇāḍhyā yogadā (200) yogyā jñānamūrtirvikāśinī /
sāvitrī kamalā lakṣmīśrīranantorasi sthitā //

You possess the best of virtues, qualities and characteristics. [200] You provide success in Yoga (meditation and contemplation). You are a personification or an embodiment of Yajña and Jñāna (i.e. you personify religious pursuits such as fire sacraments and righteous vows and actions as well as truthful knowledge, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment), while at the same time you enhance Jñāna in those who already posses it and raise the stature of and develop it further. [That is, you increase the potentials of those persons who already have Jñāna and who do Yajña if you are benevolent upon them.] You are known as Sāvitrī, Kamalā, Lakṣmī and Śrī who reside in the heart of Ananta, i.e. the Lord who is eternal and without an end, generally regarded as Lord Viṣṇu (see note to verse no. 46) (44).

सरोजनिलया शुभ्रा योगनिद्रा (210) सुदर्शना। सरस्वती सर्वविद्या जगज्ज्येष्ठा सुमंगला।। 45।।
sarojanilayā śubhrā yoganidrā (210) sudarśanā /
sarasvatī sarvavidyā jagajjyeṣṭhā sumaṃgalā //

You are seated on a lotus flower. You are auspicious and holy. [210] You are perpetually engrossed in deep meditation and are established in a deep sleep state of consciousness, called Yoga Nidrā (see verse nos. 65, 108 and 127 also). Your other names are—Sudarśana (one who holds a discus), Sarasvatī (the Goddess of learning, scholarship, intelligence, wisdom and speech) and Sarvavidyā (one who possesses all knowledge). You are the eldest one in this creation (i.e. you were born first and before the rest of the creation came into being), and you are very auspicious, holy, divine and august (45).

वासवी वरदा कीर्तिः सर्वार्थसाधिका (220)। वागीश्वरी सर्वविद्या महाविद्या सुशोभना ।।46 ।।
vāsavī varadā kīrtiḥ sarvārthasādhikā (220) /
vāgīśvarī sarvavidyā mahāvidyā suśobhanā //

You are the divine consort of Indra (called Vāsavī); you are the authority who gives boons and blessings; you are the one whose glories, magnificence, majestic powers are well known and famous throughout the realm. [220] You understand the meaning of everything (i.e. you are very wise, intelligent, erudite and scholarly); you are the Goddess of speech (i.e. Sarasvatī); you personify all the knowledge that exist at the worldly level as well as at the higher ethereal level of sublimity, called the Mahāvidyā (literally, the great knowledge of creation, and it pertains to the Ātmā and Brahma). You look adorable and admirable, auspicious and charming with these immaculate glories and virtues that you posses (46).

[Note :—The word 'Vāsava' means Indra, the king of Gods. Vāsavī, therefore, is the feminine gender of Vāsava, thereby meaning 'lady Indra'. Here it means that the queen of Gods is being honoured by these names. We must remember the context of this prayer—Śrī Rāma is praying not to a particular Goddess but to the universal cosmic power and supreme Authority from whom the rest of the creation has come into being, be it male or female, be it animate or inanimate, and be it animal, bird, reptile, human or God. Hence, the supreme Śakti or the divine, sublime energy of Nature has revealed itself in myriad forms to fulfill the different tasks needed to be done in order to keep the wheel of creation running smoothly. So, the divine Goddess is as much a consort of Indra as she is of Śiva, Viṣṇu and Brahmā. Similarly she is Sāvitrī (representing the energy of the sun), Sarasvatī (representing the Goddess of speech and wisdom), Jñāna (representing knowledge and erudition and enlightenment), Yoga (representing mediation and concentration) etc. all rolled into one single entity called the great Goddess, who has now manifested herself as Mahākālī on the battlefield of Puṣkara according to the demands of the circumstance. See also verse no. 44-45.]

गुह्यविद्यात्मविद्या च सर्वविद्यात्मभाविता।
स्वाहा विश्वम्भरी (230) सिद्धिः स्वधा मेधा धृतिः श्रुतिः ।। 47 ।।
guhyavidyātmavidyā ca sarvavidyātmabhāvitā /
svāhā viśvambharī (230) siddhiḥ svadhā medhā dhṛtiḥ śrutiḥ //

You are an embodiment of and most proficient in the most secret, most esoteric, most difficult, most complicated, most subtle and most profound knowledge pertaining to the Ātmā which is pure consciousness; this knowledge is called Ātmavidyā which is deemed to be equivalent to knowing all that is to be known in this world. You are firmly established and always engrossed in contemplation upon the Ātmā. You are Svāhā (the divine consort of the Fire-God), Viśvambharī (the mother earth; divine consorts of Viṣṇu and other Gods who sustain and protect the world), Siddhi (mystical powers, successes and accomplishments personified), Svadhā (the daughter of Prajāpati Dakṣa; offerings made to dead ancestors that sustain them in their spirit forms), Medhā (the power to remember and recollect; memory personified), Dhṛti (the daughter of Prajāpati Dakṣa and wife of Dharma, the patron God of righteousness; also meaning stability of mind; the power to catch hold of anything and firmly grasp it) and Śruti (the Vedas and others scriptures having an oral tradition; the knowledge contained therein personified) (47).

नाभिः सुनाभिः सुकृतिर्माधवी नरवाहिनी (240)।
पूजा विभावरी सौम्या भगिनी भोगदायिनी ।। 48 ।।
nābhiḥ sunābhiḥ sukṛtirmādhavī naravāhinī (240)/
pūjā vibhāvarī saumyā bhaginī bhogadāyinī //

Your other names are—Nābhi (the central core, the axis, the axle, the pith of anything; the navel through which the embryo is attached to its mother and derives its nourishment from her; here meaning the central authority around which the whole cosmos revolves much like the planets revolving around the sun in the solar system), Sunābhi (an authority that is auspicious and has good name and fame), Sukṛti (good deeds personified, Mādhavī (a famous creeper bearing fragrant flowers; the auspicious and holy basil or Tulasī leaves; Goddess Durgā; the divine consort of Mādhava which is another name for Lord Viṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa), [240] Naravāhinā (the divine consort of Kubera or Naravāha, the treasurer of Gods), Pūjya (one who is honourable, adorable, revered and worthy of worship), Vibhāvarī (the night in which stars shine brightly), Saumyā (one who is sober, pleasant, calm and peaceful, debonair and Saumya; also means one type of Chandā or poetical composition called Aryā), Bhaginī (the divine womb of Mother Nature personified; a divine sister; a celibate nun) and Bhogadāyinī (one who bestow comfort, pleasure and happiness to her devotees as well as makes evil and pervert ones suffer from punishment for their wicked deeds) (48).

शोभा वंशकरी लीला मानिनी परमेष्ठिनी (250)।
त्रैलोक्यसुन्दरी रम्या सुन्दरी कामचारिणी ।। 49 ।।
śobhā vaṃśakarī līlā māninī parameṣṭhinī (250)/
trailokyasundarī ramyā sundarī kāmacāriṇī //

You are Śobhā (auspicious, charming, adorable and worthy of being admired and lauded); you are Vaṃśakarī (the sustainer and enhancer of the clan and family of the entire clan and near family of your devotees); you are known as Līlā (a maverick player and performer of strange, mysterious and magical deeds which are beyond comprehension); you are Māninī (honourable, revered and admirable); [250] you are Parameṣṭhi (i.e. the divine consort of Brahmā, the creator, Viṣṇu, the sustainer, Śiva, the annihilator, the Virāṭ Puruṣa who is the all-encompassing macrocosmic Supreme Being from whom the rest of the Gods and the creation had emerged, and the Fire-God—see verse no. 75 of this canto 25 and verse no. 13 of canto 26); you are Trilokya Sundarī (the most beautiful and enchanting aspect of creation including all the three worlds called Trilokī); you are Rāma (another name of Lakṣmī, the Goddess of wealth, prosperity and material well being who is the consort of Lord Viṣṇu) as well as Ramyā (most charming and pleasant); you are Sundarī (beautiful and enchanting); and you are Kāma Cāriṇī (i.e. you can do whatever you wish to do, go wherever you like to go and assume any form that you want to assume) (49).

महानुभावमध्यस्था महामहिषमर्दिनी। पद्ममालांपापहरा विचित्रमुकुटानना ।। 50 ।।
mahānubhāvamadhyasthā mahāmahiṣamardinī /
padmamālāṃpāpaharā vicitramukuṭānanā //

You are at the core of the glory and majesty of those who are great, honourable, worthy and respected. You are the one who has slayed the great demon in the form of a buffalo (i.e. you are Goddess Durgā herself). You wear a garland of lotus flowers and are a vanquisher of sins. You wear a strange, marvelous and fantastic crown symbolising your glories (50).

कान्ता(260) चित्राम्बरधरा दिव्याभरणभूषिता। हंसाख्या व्योमनिलया जगत्सृष्टिविवर्द्धिनी ।।51।।
kāntā (260) citrāmbaradharā divyābharaṇabhūṣitā /
haṃsākhyā vyomanilayā jagatsṛṣṭivivarddhinī //

[260] You are Kāntā (i.e. you have a radiance that resembles a

divine, holy and sublime halo), are attired in colourful attires, are adorned with divine and magnificent ornaments, are a resident of the glorious place where the divine swans dwell (i.e. you live in the heart of a wise and enlightened creature because this swan symbolises wisdom, erudition and enlightenment and is supposed to be living in the heart of a Yogī, a wise ascetic), are present in the sky, called Vyomā, and are the authority who has created this creation, enhances, sustains and develops it (51).

निर्यन्त्रा मन्त्रवाहस्था नन्दिनी भद्रकालिका। आदित्यवर्णा (270) कौमारी मयूरवरवाहिनी।।52।।

niryantrā mantravāhasthā nandinī bhadrakālikā /
ādityavarṇā (270) kaumārī mayūravaravāhinī //

You are the authority that controls and regulates everything. You are beyond the reach of Mantras (you are superior to Mantras which are themselves holy words empowering a person with divine glories and gives him access to superior virtues and powers represented by the patron Gods of the Mantras). You are Nandinī (one of the divine and holy cows—see verse no. 91). You are Bhadra Kālikā (the divine Goddess of death and destruction who is fearful and dark complexioned but merciful, gentle and sober for her devotees). [270] You are splendours, dazzling, radiant, brilliant and bright like the Sun known as Ādityā. You are a Kumārī, i.e. a virgin lady. You are the female aspect of Kārtikeya who rides upon a peacock. (52).

[Note :—'Kārtikeya' is the patron God of war. Here it means that Kārtikeya derives his powers and authority to win the battles by the virtue of benevolence and graciousness of the great Goddess.]

वृषासनगता गौरी महाकाली सुरार्चिता। आदितिर्नियता रौद्री पद्मगर्भा (280) विवाहना।।53।।

vṛṣāsanagatā gaurī mahākālī surārcitā /
āditirniyatā raudrī padmagarbhā (280) vivāhanā //

You are seated on a buffalo. You are also known as Gaurī (i.e. the fair complexioned Goddess Pārvatī, the divine consort of Lord Śiva—see also verse no. 110) and Mahākālī (literally the great black complexioned Goddess of death and annihilation) who is worshipped, honoured and revered by the Gods. You are a personification of Aditi (the mother of Gods) and Niyati (a regulating authority of destiny, fate and luck). You are the divine consort of Rudra (Śiva), hence called Raudrī. [280] You symbolise the ovary of the lotus flower, hence called

Padma Garbhā. You are perpetually married to (i.e. are loyal to and have a steady allegiance towards) the Supreme Divinity (53).

विरूपाक्षी लेलिहाना महासुरविनाशिनी। महाफलानवद्यांगी कामपूरा विभावरी।।54।।

virūpākṣī lelihānā mahāsuravināśinī /
mahāphalānavadyāṃgī kāmapūrā vibhāvarī //

You are known as Virūpākṣī (the divine consort of Lord Śiva who is also known as Virūpākṣa because Śiva has an unconventional existence. He wears lion skin as a loin cloth, has serpents as his ornaments, remains with half-opened sleepy eyes in a state of perpetual deep meditation, has moon on his forehead as his ornament, lives in secluded places and cremation grounds, has the company of ghosts and phantoms, smears ash of the sacrificial fire on his body, and remains naked except for the loin cloth and serpents to cover his body. When he gets angry, he opens his three eye located at the tri-junction of the root of the nose and the eyebrows which spews violent blazing fire to burn the target of his wrath. See also verse no. 56). You lick your lips with your tongues (during your present ferocious and cruel form as the blood thirsty Goddess of death and destruction in the battlefield of Puṣkara; here meaning that you are always eager for the blood of those who are wicked, evil and sinful like the demons). You are a slayer and eliminator of the great evil demons. You are a bestower of great boons and rewards (upon those who are good, righteous and noble). You help in fulfillment of all desires, aspirations, hopes and deeds. You are like a dark night with glittering stars (i.e. you are dark complexioned like the night and your body has so many decoration upon it that they resemble the twinkling stars of the night sky; these stars also represent the countless number of virtues that you possess although you appear to be dark symbolising the Tama quality which are negative aspects, such as anger and wrath, being vicious, merciless and cruel in your manifestation as Mahākālī. See note to verse no. 35 in this context.) (54).

विचित्ररत्नमुकुटा प्रणतर्द्धिविवर्द्धिनी (290)। कौशिकी कर्षिणी रात्रिस्त्रिदशार्त्तिविनाशिनी।।55।।

vicitraratnamukuṭā praṇatarddhivivarddhinī (290) /
kauśikī karṣiṇī rātristridaśārttivināśinī //

You wear a strange but magnificent crown (which symbolises your virtues, glories and fame, though it is not a physical crown but only a symbolic one). [290] You are the one who enhances the welfare and well being, the good luck and fortunes, the prosperity and wealth, of your devotees. You are Kauśikī (i.e. Caṇḍikā, the Goddess with an angry and wrathful and vehement countenance), Karṣiṇī (one who attracts and pulls as well as one who scatters and disperses), and Rātri (like the night, because you are dark complexioned in your manifestation as Mahākālī—see verse no. 53 also). You are the destroyer of the troubles and torments that cause misery to the Gods (55).

विरूपा च सरूपा च भीमा मोक्षप्रदायिनी।
भक्तार्त्तिनाशिनी भव्या (300) भवभावविनाशिनी।।56।।
virūpā ca sarūpā ca bhīmā mokṣapradāyinī /
bhaktārttināśinī bhavyā (300) bhavabhāvavināśinī //

You are Virūpā (i.e. you have unconventional, distorted, terrifying and ugly features—see also verse nos. 54, 66 and 76) on the one hand, and on the other you are Sarūpā (i.e. one who is pleasant, charming and endearing to look at—see verse no. 39 also). You are Bhīmā (the divine consort of both Lord Śiva and Lord Viṣṇu, i.e. Goddess Pārvatī and Lakṣmī respectively; the word also means strong, robust, powerful, terrifying, huge, colossus and formidable; it also means one who has weight, gravity, worth and whose words and presence carry a lot of authority, importance and significance). You are a bestower of Mokṣa (emancipation and salvation) and are the one who destroys the sorrows, miseries, troubles and tribulation of your devotees. (See also verse no. 107). [300] You are grand, majestic, magnificent and glorious as well as are the eliminator of all illusions, delusions and misconceptions pertaining to this mundane, artificial world of falsehoods and entrappings (56).

निर्गुणा नित्यविभवा निःसारा निरपत्रपा। यशस्विनी सामगीतिर्भावांगनिलयालया।।57।।
nirguṇā nityavibhavā niḥsārā nirapatrapā /
yaśasvinī sāmagītirbhāvāṃganilayālayā //

You are Nirguṇā (without any forms, attributes and definable characteristics; you are neutral and invisible). You are eternally Vibhavā (rich, wealthy, magnanimous, gracious, majestic and plentiful). You are without any grossness and shame (i.e. you are brave, bold, courageous and daring; although your present form as Mahākālī appears to be demeaning to your exalted stature as the supreme, divine, benevolent and sweet mother of creation, but you do not feel ashamed of your gross and crass behaviour in this form because you had to do a formidable task of killing the evil demons which would not have been possible had you not assumed this fierce and most unsavoury form). You are famed and glorious, renowned and majestic. You sing the hymns of the Sāma Veda. You can liberate a person from getting trapped in the endless cycle of transmigration (birth and death) (57).

दीक्षा (310) विद्याधरी दीप्ता महेन्द्रविनिपातिनी।
सर्वातिशायिनी विद्या सर्वशक्तिप्रदायिनी।। 58।।
dīkṣā (310) vidyādharī dīptā mahendravinipātinī /
sarvātiśāyinī vidyā sarvaśaktipradāyinī //

[310] You are a personification of Dīkṣā (the formal process of initiation of a disciple by a teacher in any spiritual discipline) and an embodiment of Vidyā itself (i.e. you personify knowledge and erudition for which a disciple has been initiated by his teacher). You are Dīptā (radiant, splendorous, brilliant and glorious). You can overcome and crush even the huge mountains known as Mahendra (i.e. you can surmount the greatest of difficulties and circumstances, and vanquish the greatest of enemies and hurdles). You are a bestower of Vidyā (knowledge, erudition, wisdom, skills, scholarship and expertise) as well as all the Śaktis (strength, vigour, potent, authority, powers and valour etc. upon those on whom you are benevolent, magnanimous and benign) (58).

सर्वेश्वरप्रिया तार्क्षी समुद्रान्तरवासिनी।
अकलंका निराधारा (320) नित्यसिद्धा निरामया।। 59।।
sarveśvarapriyā tārkṣī samudrāntaravāsinī /
akalaṃkā nirādhārā (320) nityasiddhā nirāmayā //

You are a dear consort of the great Lord of all, called Sarveśvara. You observe, see and witness everything that is happening. You reside inside the ocean (i.e. you represent the mermaid as well as all the treasures of the ocean). You are without any Kalaṃkā (i.e. you are free from all blemishes, taints, slander, aspersions, slur, blot, infamy, stigma and ignominy of any kind). [320] You don't need any support, help or prop for yourself. You are eternally Siddhā (accomplished, successful, fulfilled) and Nirāmayī (healthy, without any ailments or faults) (59).

कामधेनुर्वेदगर्भा धीमती मोहनाशिनी। निःसंकल्पा निरातंका विनया विनयप्रदा (330)।।60।।

kāmadhenurvedagarbhā dhīmatī mohanāśinī /
niḥsaṃkalpā nirātaṃkā vinayā vinayapradā (330) //

You are like Kāmadhenu (the celestial cow of the Gods which has the special quality of fulfilling all wishes). The Vedas have been born (created) of you. You are Dhīmatī (wise, erudite, sagacious and adroit). You are a destroyer of a Moha (delusions about and attachments with this materialistic world; passions, infatuations and endearments with the objects of the world). You do not make any Saṃkalpa (i.e. you do not have any aspirations, ambitions, volitions, desires and hopes pertaining to this mundane and artificial world and its objects of comfort and pleasure). You are eternal and without an end. [300] You give the virtue of humility and simplicity to your devotees, the virtues that you represent yourself (60).

ज्वालामालासहस्राढ्या देवदेवी मनोन्मनी। उर्वी गुर्वी गुरुः श्रेष्ठा सगुणा षड्गुणात्मिका।।61।।

jvālāmālāsahasrāḍhyā devadevī manonmanī /
urvī gurvī guruḥ śreṣṭhā saguṇā ṣaḍguṇātmikā //

You appear to be wearing a garland which is as splendorous and magnificent as thousands of flames of fire. You are the great Goddess of even the Gods (i.e. the Gods praise you). You are in that exalted stage attained in Yoga (mediation) when the external organs of the body turn inwards, the person becomes introspective and turns to perpetual contemplation and mediation. You are Urvī, i.e. mother earth personified. You are Gurvī (the respected wife of a teacher; also means most prominent, chief and eminent person). You are Śreṣṭhā (i.e. the best and most exalted), and you possess all the 6 qualities and virtues considered the most excellent of all the virtues that exist (61).

> [Note :—The six qualities or Guṇas mentioned in the last word are the following—(i) Śama (having self restraint, control, peace, tranquility, serenity, bliss and stoicness as well as equanimity and remaining unruffled), Dama (tolerance, forbearance, fortitude; (iii) Uparīti (renunciation, detachment, dispassion, indifference and non-involvement); (iv) Titikṣā (endurance, patience, fortitude, sufferance, equanimity); (v) Samādhāna (solution, answer, lack of confusion or doubts, clarity of thoughts and conception); and (vi) Śraddhā (having faith, belief, conviction, reverence and devotion).]

महाभगवती (340) भव्या वसुदेवसमुद्भवा। महेन्द्रोपेन्द्रभगिनी भक्तिगम्यपरायणा।।62।।

mahābhagavatī (340) bhavyā vasudevasamudbhavā /
mahendropendrabhaginī bhaktigamyaparāyaṇā //

[340] You are the great Goddess known as Bhagavatī (literally meaning the great mother from whose womb the rest of the creation has been born, because 'Bhaga' means a womb or the female reproductive organ, the vagina and the uterus; one of the names of Pārvatī, the divine consort of Śiva; also meaning Durgā, the Goddess who mounts a lion, and Sarasvatī, the Goddess of knowledge). You are magnificent, fantastic, glorious, grand and stupendous. The 8 Vasus have been born of you. You are a sister (Bhaginī) of Mahendra (Indra) and his junior Gods (Upendra). You are accessible and attainable only by those who are devoted to you and well steeped in that devotion (62).

[Note :—The 'Vasus' mentioned here are the 8 Gods representing the assets of the world. The other connotations are—wealth, gems, gold, rays, fire, water, Śiva, Viṣṇu, Sun, Kubera (the treasurer of Gods), a pious and holy person. Since Indra or Mahendra is the king of Gods who patronises all the assets in the world, the Goddess is supposed to be his sister. Further, since the Goddess is a manifestation of mother earth, and Indra sustains it by showering rain upon it, she is also said to be his sister.]

ज्ञानज्ञेया जरातीता वेदान्तविषया गतिः। दक्षिणा (350) दहना बाह्या सर्वभूतनमस्कृता।।63।।

jñānajñeyā jarātītā vedāntaviṣayā gatiḥ /
dakṣiṇā (350) dahanā bāhyā sarvabhūtanamaskṛtā //

You can be known by acquisition of Jñāna or by the medium of enlightenment, knowledge, wisdom and erudition. You are beyond decay and old age (i.e. you remain ever young). You are the object of study of Vedānta (or, the Upaniṣads have discussed elaborately about you in great detail, not only as the divine Goddess but also as the macrocosmic form of Nature). You are the aim of Vedānta and the final resting place of all the creatures (i.e. you are Brahma personified because Brahma is the aim of Vedānta, and it is the resting place of the entire creation according to Vedānta). [350] You are magnanimous, graciousness, kindness and charity personified. You are present everywhere, to the right and to the left. You are worshipped, adored and revered by all the mortal creatures, and all of them bow reverentially before you (63).

योगमाया विभावज्ञा महामोहा महीयसी।
सत्या सर्वसमुद्भूत्तिर्ब्रह्मवृक्षाश्रया (360) मतिः ।।64।।
yogamāyā vibhāvajñā mahāmohā mahīyasī /
satyā sarvasamudbhūttirbrahmavṛkṣāśrayā (360) matiḥ //

You are Yogamāyā personified (i.e. you represent the personified quality of Māyā in all her grandeur and majesty, possessing all the powers and strength that Yoga can bestow upon it) and you know or understand the subtle but profound meaning of it. You are Mahā-Moha (i.e. the great delusions of creation creating infatuations, attachments and hallucinations pertaining to this artificial and entrapping world). (See also verse nos. 36 and 44). You are great, magnificent, stupendous, glorious and majestic. You are truthful. You are the creator or the progenitor of the entire creation. [360] You are like the great celestial tree of the Gods called Brahma Vṛkṣa which gives shelter and refuge to the rest of the creation under its benign shadow. You are Mati (i.e. wisdom, intellect, discrimination, senses, understanding, thoughts and inclinations of a person personified) (64).

[Note :—The first word 'Yogamāyā' has two parts, Yoga and Māyā. The word Māyā has been elaborately explained as a note to verse no. 35 of this Canto, while Yoga means meditation and contemplation. Therefore, Yogamāyā refers to that cosmic delusions created by Brahmā when he did severe Tapa to initiate the process of creation, thereby producing Māyā first. As such, Māyā also represents Mother Nature, which is the female counterpart of Brahmā or Virāṭ Puruṣa. Yogamāyā is the Māyā created by doing Yoga or Tapa.]

बीजांकुरसमुद्भूतिर्ममहाशक्तिर्महामतिः। ख्यातिः प्रतिज्ञा चित्संविन्महायोगेन्द्रशायिनी।।65।।
bījāṃkurasamudbhūtirmamahāśaktirmahāmatiḥ /
khyātiḥ pratijñā citsaṃvinmahāyogendraśāyinī //

You are the factor, energy, force or vitality that enables a seed to sprout into a new shoot (see verse no. 115). You are the great Śakti (energy, force, strength, vitality and powers) that is stupendous, majestic, magnificent, marvelous and fantastic in this creation. You are Mahāmati (i.e. you possess great wisdom and intellect) and personify Khyāti (i.e. you possess fame and renown). You personify Pratijñā (firm determinations, resolves and vows). You possess the stupendous powers associated with Citta (the mind and intellect complex). You remain fixed, steadfast, peaceful and calm as if eternally sleeping in the great trance-like state obtained by doing profound Yoga (meditation and contemplation; Yoga Nidrā—see verse no. 45, 108 and 127 also) (65).

विकृतिः (370) शंकरी शास्त्री गन्धर्वा यक्षसेविता।
वैश्वानरी महाशाला देवसेना गुहप्रिया।। 66।।
vikṛtiḥ (370) śaṃkarī śāstrī gandharvā yakṣasevitā /
vaiśvānarī mahāśālā devasenā guhapriyā //

[370] You look Vikṛti (i.e. deformed, formidable, abominable, terrifying, unconventional and abnormal—see also verse no. 54 and 56). You are the divine consort of Lord Śaṅkara or Śiva; hence you are called Śaṃkarī. You are Śāstrī (one who has graduated in Sanskrit literature; here meaning that the Goddess is well versed in the scriptures and is an expert in the Śāstras). You are served by the Gandharvas (celestial musicians; a type of semi-God) and Yakṣas (the guards of Gods treasury). You are the Vaiśvānara fire, the supreme Lord and pure consciousness personified. You are an abode of all the great virtues and you possess all the great positive traits; hence, you are also known as Mahāśālā, or the great resting place or a dwelling of all that is great. You single handedly represent the entire army of the Gods (i.e. you can vanquish all the evil and anti-God factors in creation by your own self, and you do not need any other help or any army to do it). You like to remain in a lonely, secluded, serene, calm and peaceful place like that of a cave (66).

महारात्री शिवानन्दा शची (380) दुःस्वप्ननाशिनी।
पूज्याऽपूज्या जगद्धात्री दुर्विज्ञेयस्वरूपिणी।। 67।।
mahārātrī śivānandā śacī (380) duḥsvapnanāśinī /
pūjyā'pūjyā jagaddhātrī durvijñeyasvarūpiṇī //

You resemble a great night because you are dark complexioned and apparently look vicious and most cruel and formidable. You remain engrossed in eternal and perpetual bliss and happiness; hence you are also known as Śivānandā. You are the one who gives happiness to Lord Śiva, hence you are also called Śivanandā. [380] You are Śacī (the divine consort of Indra; you are the queen of Gods because Indra is their king). You are the eliminator of nightmares (i.e. you remove all fears and consternations in the heart of a creature). You are adorable, honourable and worthy of worship and reverence as well as are to the contrary (i.e. you represent the great paradox of creation —that is, this creation has both the good and the bad in it existing or cohabiting simultaneously). You are the mother of the universe. You are an embodiment of that entity which is beyond comprehension and knowledge (67).

गुहाम्बिका गुहोत्पत्तिर्महापीठा मरुत्सुता।
हव्यवाहान्तरा (390) गार्गी हव्यवाहसमुद्भवा।। 68।।
guhāmbikā guhotpattirmahāpīṭhā marutsutā /
havyavāhāntarā (390) gārgī havyavāhasamudbhavā //

You are the mother who lives in a cave (i.e. you prefer solitude and serenity which is conducive to contemplation and meditation—see also verse no. 85). You have your origin in a virtual void or the cosmic hole. [That is only a metaphor to emphasise the fact that from the darkness of a deep void or hole, the divine energy symbolised by the Goddess has emerged just like a pillar or column of light energy emerges from the mouth of a cave.] You are seated on a majestic seat or throne. [The word also means that your residence is considered as a great pilgrim site.] You are known as Marutsuta, i.e. the daughter of Marut (the Wind-God). [390] You are present both inside as well as outside of the Havya or Habya, which is the offering made to the fire sacrifice. [That is, you represent the essential elements of food that give it its worth as a life sustaining and nourishing factor, and at the same time you represent the grosser aspects of food—such as its colour and other external features, its tastes and texture, its growth, it having its origin as a plant etc. If food is a metaphor for life, then the Goddess is that element which not only sustains life from within but also protects it form outside.] You are Gārgī (Goddess Durgā; a famous, wise and erudite lady born in the clan of sage Garga; the wife of sage Yajñavalkya). You are like an ocean of Havya (which is the food offered to the fire sacrifice; here meaning that there is no shortage of food where you are present; it also means your worship is equivalent to the offering of sacrifices to the Gods; also it refers to the offerings made to the fire sacrifice itself) (68).

जगद्योनिर्जगन्माता जगनमृत्युर्जरातिगा। बुद्धिर्माता बुद्धिमती पुरुषान्तरवासिनी (400)।। 69।।
jagadyonirjaganmātā jaganamṛtyurjarātigā /
buddhirmātā buddhimatī puruṣāntaravāsinī (400) //

You are the divine cosmic mother from whose divine womb the whole world has been born. You are the one who can vanquish and control even death and old age in this world. You are the mother who blesses your devotees with Buddhi (i.e. you bestow them with intelligence, wisdom, rational thinking and discrimination); you are Buddhi personified (i.e. you are intelligent, wise, erudite, a rational thinker and act after proper thought and discrimination). [400] You reside in the bosom of Puruṣa (i.e. you are the inspiration that drives the divine Virāṭ Puruṣa to do what he wishes to do; it also means that you are present in the bosom of all males representing all the characteristics in this creation marked by manliness, bravery, courageousness and boldness; you are the driving force of all the virtues that are represented by the Puruṣa) (69).

तपस्विनी समाधिस्था त्रिनेत्रा दिविसंस्थिता। सर्वेन्द्रियमनोमाता सर्वभूतहृदिस्थिता।। 70।।

tapasvinī samādhisthā trinetrā divisaṃsthitā /
sarvendriyamanomātā sarvabhūtahṛdisthitā //

You are a Tapasvinī (the female gender of a Tapasvī, i.e. a person who does Tapa, or keeps rigid righteous vows, does penances, follows austerities, always observes religious sacraments and controls his passions and desires, remains detached from the world and generally undergoes hardships to attune his spirit and endeavours to lift it to a high pedestal—see also verse no. 73). You are established in eternal Samādhī (a trance-like state of mediation, marked by bliss and total unawareness of the external world—see also verse no. 45). You have 3 eyes, hence you are known as Trinetra (having two ordinary eyes and one eye of wisdom said to be located at the tri-junction of the eyebrows and the root of the nose; according to another version, this third eye spews fire of wrathful anger at evil and wicked people in the world). You are established in gold (i.e. wherever you are present, there are riches and prosperity; it also means that wherever there is richness, the Goddess is sure to be present there as Lakṣmī). You are the mother (progenitor and a regulator) of all the organs (5 sense organs—eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin, and 5 organs of action—hands, legs, genital, anus, mouth) as well as the mind (which is the 11 organ). You dwell in the heart of all mortal creatures called Bhūtas (because they are made up of five elements—space, air, fire, water, earth called Bhūtas—see also verse no. 64) (70).

संसारतारिणी विद्या ब्रह्मवादिमनोलया। ब्रह्माणीवृहती (410) ब्राह्मी ब्रह्मभूता भयाविनः ।।71।।

saṃsāratāriṇī vidyā brahmavādimanolayā /
brahmāṇīvṛhatī (410) brāhmī brahmabhūtā bhayāvinaḥ //

You take one across the ocean-like world of transmigration. [That is, you provide liberation to the world and its inhabitants form the torments and sufferings of mundane existence—see also verse nos. 41 and 56). You are Vidyā personified (i.e. you are an embodiment of all truthful knowledge, information, science, arts, crafts and skills—see also verse no. 44, 46 and 47). You are an expert in the essence of the supreme, transcendental knowledge of Brahma (see verse no. 46 also). You are a dweller in the mind and the heart of a creature. You are Brahmāṇī (the divine consort of Brahmā, the creator). [410] You are extensive, large, huge, vast, great and colossus in your influence; hence are known as Vṛhatī. You are Brāhmī (the cosmic female aspect of the supreme Brahma, in the form of Mother Nature). You are the 5 elements produced by Brahma (which are space, air, fire, water and earth, called Bhūtas). You are most horrifying and fear instilling (in the hearts of those who are evil, wicked and pervert) (71).

हिरण्यमयी महारात्रिः संसारपरिवर्तिका।
सुमालिनी सुरुपा च तारिणीं भाविनी (420) प्रभा।। 72।।
hiraṇyamayī mahārātriḥ saṃsāraparivartikā /
sumālinī surupā ca tāriṇīṃ bhāvinī (420) prabhā //

You are golden in countenance (or you have a gold-like visage; i.e. you are an embodiment of riches, prosperity and well being in this world, the virtues associated with gold. It also means that you are glorious, radiant and splendorous, the virtues associated with the Sun). Your countenance is dark like a dark night (because you are presently in the form of Mahākālī, a word having the component 'Kālī' which literally means black). You are the authority who can change the world (or can bring about a transition in the present state of the world). You are Sumālinī (a group of words or stanza having 6 syllables or words in each of its steps. Here it simply means that you are wise and an expert scholar who is skilled with words—see also verse no. 76). You have a beautiful, charming and attractive countenance. You are the one who provides liberation and deliverance, emancipation and salvation; hence you are called Tāriṇī (see also verse nos. 56 and

71). [420] You are present in all the thoughts and emotions of a creature. You are glorious and radiant, bright and brilliant, and have a holy and auspicious splendour effusing like a halo from your divine self, and hence you are known as Prabhā (72).

उन्मीलनी सर्वसहासर्वप्रत्ययसाक्षिणी।
तपिनी तापिनी विश्वा भोगदा धारिणीधरा (430)।।73।।
unmīlanī sarvasahāsarvapratyayasākṣiṇī /
tapinī tāpinī viśvā bhogadā dhāriṇīdharā (430) //

You are divinity personified, revealed and unfolded in the form of this myriad, colourful world; hence you are called Unmīlanī. You are the support and foundation, solace and succour as well as the refuge of all. You are a witness to all that is visible. You are Tapa personified (i.e. austerity, penance, sufferance and vows are revealed in your form) as well as the one who does that Tapa (i.e. you are the one who follows the tenets of Tapa—see also verse no. 70). You are an image of the Viśvā (universe, the entire world); you are the one who enjoys it; and you are the one who wears it or supports it. [430] You are Mother Earth personified (73).

सुसौम्या चन्द्रवदना ताण्डवासक्तमानसा। सत्त्वशुद्धिकरी शुद्धिर्मलत्रयविनाशिनी।।74।।
susaumyā candravadanā tāṇḍavāsaktamānasā /
sattvaśuddhikarī śuddhirmalatrayavināśinī //

You are most pleasant, pleasing, charming, gentle, sober, Saumyā and debonair. You are as beautiful as the full moon. You find joy and exhilaration in dancing the cosmic dance called Tāṇḍava. You are truthful and a purifier of all. You are pure, uncorrupt, chaste and clean of all blemishes and faults. You are the destroyer of all the 3 legendary torments associated with this creation[1] (74).

[Note :—[1]The three torments that afflict a creature in this world are the following—(i) Ādhibhautika—torments related to the world, such as enemies, cruel animals, bandits and kings; (ii) Ādhidaivika—those torments which pertain to malignant and unfavourable Gods and stars; and (iii) Ādidaihika—those pertaining to bodily ailments, such as disease and other handicaps.]

जगत्प्रिया जगन्मूर्तिस्त्रिमूर्तिरमृताश्रया (440)। निराश्रया निराहारा निरंकुशरणोद्भवा।।75।।
jagatpriyā jaganmūrtistrimūrtiramṛtāśrayā (440) /
nirāśrayā nirāhārā niraṃkuśaraṇodbhavā //

You are endeared to the world and are an image of the world (because in your macrocosmic form, you embody the entire world). You are Trimūrti (or you are a personification of all the three Gods—Brahmā, the creator, Viṣṇu, the sustainer and Śiva the annihilator, all at the same time—see also verse no. 49). You are an abode or a treasury or a receptacle of Amṛta (ambrosia of life, eternity and bliss). [That is, that elixir which bestows life, eternity and bliss is available with you in abundance.] [440] You are a self supporting authority and do not need a prop to support you or a foundation to rest upon for your self. You do not need even to eat anything to survive (because you are eternal and never die as well as are a personification of food itself, hence you need not have other nourishment). You do not have any authority which is superior to you and who would exercise control over you (i.e. you are yourself a senior most authority which control others). You, as Mahākālī, have emerged (or manifested yourself) in this battlefield (75).

चक्रहस्ता विचित्रांगी स्त्रग्विणी पद्मधारिणी। परापरविधानज्ञा महापुरुषपूर्वजा।। 76।।
cakrahastā vicitrāṃgī sragviṇī padmadhāriṇī /
parāparavidhānajñā mahāpuruṣapūrvajā //

You hold a Cakra (the discus) in your hand. Your body and countenance are most fascinating and strange as well as mysterious (because it is most unconventional and odd looking—see also verse nos. 54 and 56). You are a Sragviṇī (a poetic stanza having four Sanskrit or Hindi alphabets 'Ra' in it; here meaning one he is an expert poet, a learned person, a bard and one who is well versed with scriptures and singing of hymns and can play cleverly with words—see also verse no. 72). You hold a divine lotus in your hand. You are supreme and transcendental as well as well versed in that supreme and transcendental knowledge which is sublime and subtle. You are an ancestor of all great and exalted beings (i.e. you are the patriarch of wise, erudite, scholarly class of people) (76).

विद्येश्वरप्रिया (450) ऽविद्या विद्युज्जिह्व जितश्रमा।
विद्यामयी सहस्त्राक्षी सहस्त्रश्रवणात्मजा।। 77।।
vidyeśvarapriyā (450) 'vidyā vidyujjihva jitaśramā /
vidyāmayī sahasrākṣī sahasraśravaṇātmajā //

[450] You are dear to the wise and enlightened Lord of the universe

(i.e. you are the divine consort of Lord Viṣṇu who has manifested himself as Śrī Rāma, or you are Lakṣmī manifested as Sītā). You also represent Avidyā (that is, since you represent the whole gamut of creation having both the positive as well as the negative traits, the good and the bad, it follows that you must represent ignorance, delusions and lack of erudition and sagacity simply because you also represent wisdom, erudition, scholarship and knowledge—see word no. 5 also). Your tongue resembles the glittering streak or a 'stab' of lightening, flickering, dazzling, swaying and zigzagging wildly in the sky amongst the bank of clouds. [Here, the dark body of Mahākālī is akin to the dark cloud, and her swift, agile, agressive motions as well as her divine glories and majesty are akin to the streak of light stabbing across the body of the cloud.] You are never tired or weary. You are an embodiment of Vidyā (knowledge, expertise, skills and arts as well as scholarship and erudition). [Compare this word Vidyā with Avidyā mentioned in word no. 2 of this verse.] You have a thousand eyes and are a daughter of the one who has a thousand ears (77).

[Note :—(i) The phrase 'a thousand ears' is a figure of speech to indicate the Virāṭ Puruṣa or Brahma aspect of Mahākālī. It also means that Brahma or Virāṭ Puruṣa or the macrocosmic Supreme Soul of creation has manifested himself in the form of Mahākālī. Thousands of ears also mean that the Goddess can hear so many things which are not possible for any ordinary creature to hear. Since the Goddess is a manifestation of Mother Nature called Prakṛti, who in turn had been born from Virāṭ, she is also deemed to be his daughter. She hears everything; she is aware of everything; see knows everything; she is all-knowing and omniscient.

(ii) We must note that the Goddess is said to be a personification of Avidyā as well as Vidyā because, as explained above, she incorporates all aspects of creation, good and bad, high and low, bright and dark, erudite and stupid, righteous and unrighteous, auspicious and inauspicious.]

सहस्त्ररश्मिपद्मस्था महेश्वरपदाश्रया।
ज्वालिनी (460) सद्मना व्याप्ता तैजसी पद्मरोधिका॥78॥
sahasraraśmipadmasthā maheśvarapadāśrayā /
jvālinī (460) sadmanā vyāptā taijasī padmarodhikā //

A thousand rays of radiant light emanate from your body and radiate out from it (see also verse no. 110). You sit on a lotus flower. You are devoted to and dependent upon the holy, august and divine feet of Lord Maheśvara (i.e. you are the divine consort of Lord Śiva, Pārvatī, who always serves her Lord Maheśvara, the great Lord or Īśvara). [460] You are glorious, radiant and brilliant like a fire. You hold a lotus, are all pervading and immanent, are bright, brilliant and spirited, and you exercise self restraint by sitting in a yogic (meditative) posture known as Padmāsana, which is to sit in a lotus-like posture of Yoga (78).

महादेवाश्रया मान्या महादेवमनोरमा।
व्योमलक्ष्मीः सिंहरथा केचितान्यमितप्रभा (470)।।79।।
mahādevāśrayā mānyā mahādevamanoramā /
vyomalakṣmīḥ siṃharathā kecitānyamitaprabhā (470) //

You are under the protection of and dependent upon Mahādeva (Lord Śiva, because you are Pārvatī, the Goddess who is his consort). You are honourable, respected, revered, worthy and admired. You are the one who enchants the mind and the heart of Mahādeva (Śiva). You are Goddess Lakṣmī (the divine consort of Viṣṇu) who resides in the heaven, called Vyoma (literally, the sky). You are astride a lion (as Goddess Durgā). You are Cekitāna (a wise, intelligent, witty, erudite and sagacious Goddess who has splendour, radiance and majesty, and are a divine consort of the great God Śiva). [470] Your radiance, brilliance, splendour, wisdom and intelligence are measureless and boundless (79).

विश्वेश्वरी विमानस्था विशोका शोकनाशिनी। अनाहता कुण्डलिनी नलिनी पद्मवासिनी।।80।।
viśveśvarī vimānasthā viśokā śokanāśinī /
anāhatā kuṇḍalinī nalinī padmavāsinī //

You are a mistress and the supreme Authority of the whole world. You sit in a plane in the heavens. You have no sorrows, grief or miseries with you; you remove these negative traits causing torments, miseries and troubles to your devotees. You cannot be hurt, injured decapacitated or defeated and subjugated in any way. You are the stupendous cosmic spiritual energy trapped inside the Kuṇḍalinī present inside a creature. You are Nalinī (a dweller inside a lotus flower or a place abundant with such flowers; according to Purāṇas, the word means a stream of the holy river Ganges; a sweet fragrance; a stanza having five Hindi or Sanskrit alphabets 'Sa'). You are a dweller inside a lotus flower, or you sit upon such a flower (80).

[Note :—(i) The five word 'Anāhata' has two other connotations—(a)

According to science of 'word', it is the normally unheard, inaudible and imperceptible cosmic sound called Nāda present everywhere in the cosmos, but it can be heard by a Yogī only when all other interfering sounds originating from the mundane world are shut off, e.g. by closing the ears with fingers. The divine Mantra OM is the finest example of the Anāhata sound. See also verse no. 32. (b) According to Yoga, this is the name given to the subtle energy center in the body, called the Cakra.

(ii) Kuṇḍalinī is a day-to-day word in the realm of the science and philosophy of Yoga. It is an 8-coil energy center lying at the base of the spine. In Yoga, attempts are made to ignite and activate it by doing various exercises called Āsanas. To do them, one has to sit chiefly in the Padmāsana posture mentioned in verse no. 78, and do Prāṇāyāma, which is regulation of the death. Once activated, the trapped subtle energy present in the Kuṇḍalinī snakes itself up the core of the spine through the Suṣumnā nerve, and goes right up to the top of the head to give an experience of everlasting bliss to the Yogī.]

शतानन्दा सतां कीर्तिः (480) सर्वभूताशयस्थिता।
वाग्देवता ब्रह्मकला कलातीता कलावती।।81।।

śatānandā satāṃ kīrtiḥ (480) sarvabhūtāśayasthitā /
vāgdevatā brahmakalā kalātītā kalāvatī //

You are Śatānandā (the female counterpart of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Lord Kṛṣṇa; also meaning a bestower of happiness and bliss, called Ānanda, which is a hundred times, or Śata, more than that given by all other sources). [480] You embody the glory and fame of all those who are righteous, truthful, virtuous and noble. You pervade all the Bhūtas, which are the basic elements of creation (such as space/sky, air/wind, fire/energy, water and earth) as well as all the mortal creatures formed out of these elements (in their various permutations and combinations). You are a personification of the patron God of speech (i.e. the Fire-God, because according to Upaniṣads, the Fire-God took up residence in a person's speech at the time of creation). You represent the Kalā of Brahma (or the different skills, the different expertise, the wisdom and erudition, the brilliance, grandeur and majesty, the various manifestation and revelations, forms and fractions of the supreme, transcendental authority known as Brahma). You are even beyond the definition of the word Kalā (which also means skills, expertise, grandeur, brilliance, tricks, sporting and playful activities, a division or fraction of that Brahma). You possess the virtues of Kalā (as defined above), and therefore you are known as 'Kalāvatī' (one who possesses all the virtues and qualities and characteristic features that define the word Kalā) (81).

ब्रह्मर्षिर्ब्रह्महृदया ब्रह्म विष्णुशिवप्रिया।
व्योमशक्तिः क्रियाशक्ति(490)र्जनशक्तिः परागतिः ।। 82 ।।
brahmarṣirbrahmahṛdayā brahma viṣṇuśivapriyā /
vyomaśaktiḥ kriyāśakti(490)rjanaśaktiḥ parāgatiḥ //

You are like a wise sage or seer who has attained the stature equivalent to that of Brahma, the supreme, transcendental and sublime authority of creation. In fact, you are the symbolic 'heart' (essence) of that Brahma. You are dear to the creator Brahmā, the sustainer Viṣṇu and the concluder Śiva. You are the Śakti (divine energy, powers, potent and strength as well as authority) present in the sky called Vyoma (which is the subtlest element of creation and is all pervading and all encompassing, and in which the most powerful wind and fire elements reside—see also verse nos. 23 and 152). [490] You are the stupendously powerful force that is produced by any action, called Kriyā Śakti (because action is necessary for any endeavour or enterprise to succeed, and this success produces a force that enhances the glory of the person who takes that action, providing him with glory, fame and satisfaction). You are the force of unity of creation (or the powerful force that is produced when all the creatures of this creation act in sync with each other, when their harmonious actions produce a force powerful enough to overcome the greatest of obstacles or hurdles—you represent that overwhelming force). You are the supreme, transcendental abode where all the souls find their ultimate rest, peace and solace, called Parāgati (82).

क्षोभिका रौद्रिका भेद्या भेदाभेदविवर्जिता।
अभिन्ना भिन्नसंस्थाना वंशिनी वंशहारिणी (500) ।। 83 ।।
kṣobhikā raudrikā bhedyā bhedābhedavivarjitā /
abhinnā bhinnasaṃsthānā vaṃśinī vaṃśahāriṇī (500) //

You are that Goddess that instills or causes agitation or restlessness and anguish (in the heart of those who are sinful, evil and pervert). You represent Rudra (Lord Śiva's angry and ferocious form—see also verse no. 103). You can pierce through anything, can impregnate even the impregnable, can split anything however minute, and can unravel the greatest of mysteries and secret. At the same time, you remain aloof or immune to and indifferent towards such debates or schisms as those arising from differences of opinions, perceptions and understanding about your secrets and mysteries. You are inseparable and one, indivisible, immutable and unfractinable. But at the same time you are present independently, as separate entity in all the individual creatures of this world who are independent and distinct from each other. [That is, though you are one complete indivisible whole, like Brahma, but you have assumed so many innumerable separate identities as there are creatures, all of whom have independent existence, but you reside in each of their bosoms as their Ātmā.] You are a magnanimous, benevolent and benign Goddess who is the benign benefactor for the clan or family of your devotees. [500] At the same time, you can eliminate the clan or family of others who are sinful, pervert and unrighteous (83).

गुह्यशक्तिर्गुणातीता सर्वदा सर्वतोमुखी। भगिनी भगवत्पत्नी सकला कालकारिणी।। 84।।
guhyaśaktirguṇātītā sarvadā sarvatomukhī /
bhaginī bhagavatpatnī sakalā kālakāriṇī //

You are the secret and mysterious Śakti. You are beyond attributes and your virtues and characteristic features cannot be defined. You are ever present, eternal, everlasting and perennial. You are universal, all-pervading and complete. You are a sister of all of the creatures. You are the divine consort of Lord God. You are an embodiment of all that exists. You are the cause of all circumstance and times (good or bad, fortune as well as misfortunes) (84).

सर्ववित्सर्वतोभद्रा (510) गुह्यातीता गुहाबलिः।
प्रक्रिया योगमाता च गन्धा विश्वेश्वरेश्वरी।। 85।।
sarvavitsarvatobhadrā (510) guhyātītā guhābaliḥ /
prakriyā yogamātā ca gandhā viśveśvareśvarī //

[510] You are all-knowing and omniscient as well as auspicious and well being personified. You are more profound than the deepest of mysteries and the greatest of secrets; you are more obscure and hidden than anything else. You reside in a cavern or cave (i.e. you prefer solitude, serenity and tranquility of a cave which is conducive to contemplation and meditation—see also verse no. 68). You are the 'process' or Prakriyā of doing Yoga (i.e. you show how meditation

should be actually done), and at the same time, you are the patron goddess of that Yoga, you enable a Yogī to successfully complete his meditation. You take care of all those who do meditation; you protect them and guide and help them to attain success in their endeavour. You are known as Gandhā (literally meaning anything which gives out a smell or fragrance or aroma, generally used in Yoga text or formal ritualistic worship process when some scent is burnt to give a divine ambience to the place where such religious exercises are being done). You are the mistress and supreme Authority who is the Goddess of the whole universe (85).

कपिला कपिलाकान्ता कनकाभा कलान्तरा (520)।
पुण्या पुष्करिणी भोक्त्री पुरन्दरपुरःसरा ।। 86 ।।
kapilā kapilākāntā kanakābhā kalāntarā (520) /
puṇyā puṣkariṇī bhoktrī purandarapuraḥsarā //

You are known as Kapilā (literally one who is simple, straightforward, not crooked and deceitful; also refers to one of the daughters of Prajāpati Dakṣa who was married to sage Kapila). Your radiance is brilliant, bright and splendorous (i.e. you look glorious and splendorous; the word Kapilā also means bright, white, grey). Your glorious radiance and glowing countenance resembles that of gold. [520] You are present inside the smallest of things. You personify or embody Puṇya, or all that which is righteous, virtuous and good. You are called Puṣkariṇī (literally a small lake in a pilgrimage site known as Puṣkara where Lord Brahmā, the creator, is worshipped as the patron deity). You are the one who enjoys everything (i.e. the whole creation serves you and you are the beneficiary of all the efforts made in this world). You are foremost amongst those who are conquerors and vanquishers of evil mongers and sinful ones. [The word Puranadara means one who destroys or breaks into a house or a city, e.g. Indra who had destroyed the city of demons; hence, the Goddess represents those good forces in creation which conquer and destroyer the negative forces.] (86)

पोषणी परमैश्वर्यभूतिदा भूतिभूषणा। पञ्चब्रह्मसमुत्पत्तिः परमात्मात्मविग्रहा ।। 87 ।।
poṣaṇī paramaiśvaryabhūtidā bhūtibhūṣaṇā /
pañcabrahmasamutpattiḥ paramātmātmavigrahā //

You are the one who sustains and nourishes the whole world. You are the one who bestows great glories and fames, majesties and magnificence. You are the ornamentation of the creation (i.e. it is your presence that lends charm and beauty to this otherwise charmless and ugly world). You are born out of 'Pañca Brahma', the word used for the 5 basic elements of creation (which are space, wind, fire, water and earth) and their respective virtues or powers of perception (such as word or speech, touch or feeling, form or sight, taste and smell respectively). You are the supreme, transcendental soul called Parmātmā at the macro level, and at the same time you are the Ātmā of the individual creature at the micro level (87).

[Note :—'Pañca' means five, and 'Brahma' refers to that entity that gives rise to, or which is the cause of the whole creation coming into being. Since these five elements—sky, wind, fire, water and earth—are regarded as the basic ingredients of life, they are treated as being synonymous with Brahma in their separate as well as combined form, because it is from Brahma that the creation has come into being. Another relevant word is 'Pañcadeva', or the five divine Gods of the Hindus. They are the creator Brahmā, the sustainer Viṣṇu, the annihilator Śiva, the Fire-God and Indra who is the God of rain or water which sustains life in this world. Other versions describe these five Gods as the following—Sun (Āditya), Gaṇeśa (the son of Śiva and Pārvatī; the God who is worshipped first before the start of any enterprise and who is the patron God of all successes), Goddess, Rudra (Śiva) and Viṣṇu.]

नर्मोदया (530) भानुमती योगिज्ञेया मनोजवा।
बीजरूपा रजोरूपा वशिनी योगरूपिणी ।। 88 ।।
narmodayā (530) bhānumatī yogijñeyā manojavā /
bījarūpā rajorūpā vaśinī yogarūpiṇī //

[530] You are known as Narmodayā[1] and Bhānumatī (i.e. you are as splendorous and radiant as the Sun known as Bhānu). You are known to and attainable by ascetics who do Yoga (meditation); or you are understood and realised, witnessed and experienced through the process of Yoga. You are the divine consort of Manoja (or Lord Viṣṇu; that is you are Goddess Lakṣmī personified) as well as you are as swift and agile as the one of the sons of the Fire-God, also known as Manojavā. Besides this, you are beautiful, pleasant, charming, attractive and enchanting for the mind and heart, and that is why you are called Manojā. You are a personification of the seed which is add the root of creation. You are the mensural flow of a fertile woman which helps in the conception of the creation.You have the

potentials, powers and authority to control all, and you are Yoga personified (88).

[Note :—[1]The first word 'Narmodayā' refers to Goddess Pārvatī and Lakṣmī who are the divine consorts of Lord Śiva and Viṣṇu respectively. 'Narmadā' is one of the seven holy rivers of India. It is in Madhya Pradesh state, having its origin from the summit called Amarakaṇṭaka in the Vindhyācala mountain range and falls into the Arabian Sea near Bharoch. The pebbles flowing in this river are rounded and smooth, and they are worshipped as a symbol of Lord Śiva, called Śiva's liṅgam, or as Śāligrāma, a symbol of Lord Viṣṇu. So that the Goddess, who is the divine consort of either Lord Śiva or Lord Viṣṇu, also creates these rounded stones which are worshipped as their gross symbols as described above in the Narmadā River, and hence she is known as Narmadayā. The word 'Udaya' means to rise. Hence, Śiva and Viṣṇu have virtually 'risen' from the womb of the divine mother who is the macrocosmic Śakti or female aspect of Brahma. The symbolism is very clear—Viṣṇu and Śiva, who are manifestations of Brahmā, have their origin in the cosmic womb of Brahma represented by the Goddess.]

सुमन्त्रा मन्त्रिणी पूर्णा (540) ह्लादिनी क्लेशनाशिनी।
मनोहरिर्मनोरक्षी तापसी वेदरूपिणी।। 89।।
sumantrā mantriṇī pūrṇā (540) hlādinī kleśanāśinī /
manoharirmanorakṣī tāpasī vedarūpiṇī //

You are the one who personifies auspicious Mantras (divine, holy, eclectic and powerful words) and are a good, wise, sagacious, erudite and adroit advisor or minister. [That is, you are a wise teacher, guide and advisor for the whole creation.] [540] You are complete in all respects. You are a provider of exhilaration and happiness. You are a destroyer, a dispeller, an eliminator or remover of torments, miseries, anguish, grief, troubles and tribulation of all kinds. You are charming and pleasing for the mind, or in other words, you attract attention of your devotees by your pleasing, merciful, benevolent and magnanimous stance and demeanours. You can be visualised by the eyes of the mind (i.e. by wisdom, enlightenment, deep insight, contemplation and meditation upon your divine form). You do Tapa (i.e. you observe a righteous life, do penance and austerities and uphold righteous vows). You are an embodiment or a personification or a manifestation of the Vedas (i.e. you are wise, enlightenment, learned, scholarly and a treasury of the highest form of knowledge as contained in the Vedas—see also verse nos. 90 and 133) (89).

वेदशक्तिर्वेदमाता वेदविद्या प्रकाशिनी।
योगेश्वरेश्वरी (550) माला महाशक्तिर्मनोमयी।। 90।।
vedaśaktirvedamātā vedavidyā prakāśinī /
yogeśvareśvarī (550) mālā mahāśaktirmanomayī //

You embody the powerful potentials and stupendous strength of the knowledge contained in the Vedas. In fact, you are the 'mother' of the Vedas (i.e. you create the knowledge contained in the Vedas, you enhance them, provide nourishment to them, sustain them, take care of them and protect them). You are a preacher and a teacher par excellence who has brought to light and who has focused the light of wisdom and intellect to illuminate the great and profound knowledge enshrined in the Vedas. You have highlighted that knowledge for the benefit of the world. (See also verse no. 133). [550] You are the patron Goddess of great Yogīs (ascetics). (See also verse no. 27). You are known as Mālā, literally a garland but it's a metaphor for possessing all the good virtues and qualities stringed together at one place to adorn the person who possess them. In other words, you posses all the good virtues at one place, one following the other like the beads of a rosary or the flowers threaded in a garland. You are called Mahā Śakti or the great super power of creation, possessing stupendous and unprecedented powerful energy, the matchless authority that has effective punch and strength to do anything in this world. You are an entity that resides in the Mana (the mind and heart) of a creature (i.e. you have subtle forms that can be known by the mind and you reside in the heart of your devotees. It also means that you provide intelligence and wisdom to your devotees as well as endow them with righteous and good emotions and sentiments) (90).

विश्वावस्था वीरमुक्तिविद्युन्माला विहायसी।
पीवरी सुरभि वन्द्या (560) नन्दिनी नन्दवल्लभा।। 91।।
viśvāvasthā vīramuktividyunmālā vihāyasī /
pīvarī surabhi vandyā (560) nandinī nandavallabhā //

You are established uniformally throughout the entire world (i.e. you are all-pervading and omnipresent). You are a provider of liberation, deliverance and emancipation to those who are brave, courageous, valiant and bold. You are dazzling, brilliant, radiant and splendours like a series of lightening streaks. You smile most pleasantly, sweetly and endearingly (at your devotees, as a gesture of your love and affection for them). You are known as Pīvarī (literally meaning a young lady; a milch cow; a creeper whose roots and seeds are used for medicinal purposes; peach; a kind of medicinal plant called Śāliparṇa. In other word, you have a benevolent presence that provides succour and solace to the creatures, takes care of their nourishment even as a cow provides milk to the people to help them derive balanced nutrition, and you ensure their all round good health and well being even as the various herbs give beneficial effects instead of being harmful to men). [560] You are honoured, revered, adored, admired and worshipped (Vandya) as Surabhi[1] (a cow; a mythical Goddess from whom the milch cows are said to have originated; a sweet fragrance or scent; earth; the revered basil (Tulasī) tree; wine or any other fermented liquid—it is admired for its effect on the nerves which makes a man forget about all his miseries and pains as long as the intoxicating effect of that fermented liquid holds). [See also verse nos. 146.] You are also honoured and worshipped as Nandinī[2], i.e. you are a bestower of happiness and joy (see also verse no. 53). You are dear to the king of the cowherd community who was known as Nanda (and in whose household Śrī Kṛṣṇa had spent his early childhood) (91).

> [Note :—More often than not, a word has many connotations and different shades of meaning and applications, quite unrelated and divergent to each other. For example, the eighth word in this verse, Nandinī[2], also means a cow which was born from Surabhi[1], the mythological mother cow from whom all the cows were born and which belonged to sage Vasiṣṭha, the royal preceptor of the clan in which Śrī Rāma was born, the clan of king Raghu. If this meaning is taken into consideration, than the 6, 7 and 8 words would mean 'you are like the honourable and revered mother of all cows, called Surabhi, from whom the all wish fulfilling cow named Nandinī was born'. It's another way for saying that the Goddess is the mother of all good things in life, she is a herald of good fortunes and she fulfils all the wishes and provides for objects that would satisfy all the needs of the creatures.
>
> Further, 'Nandinī'[2] also means a composition having 13 letters or syllables, starting with the alphabet 'Sa' and followed by the alphabet 'Ja' once and then 'Sa' repeated twice again. With this meaning, the above group of 3 words would mean as follows—'You are like the great celestial mother called Surabhi[1] from whom the milk giving cows were born, and who is worshipped, lauded and admired by singing prayers in her honour

composed according to the 'Nandinī' style of composition as described above. Another meaning of Nandinī is 'a daughter'. Hence, 'you are the great honourable mother called Surabhi from whom the holy and revered cow called Nandinī was born'.]

भारती परमानन्दा परापरविभेदिका। सर्वप्रहरणोपेता काम्या कामेश्वरेश्वरी।। 92।।

bhāratī paramānandā parāparavibhedikā /
sarvapraharaṇopetā kāmyā kāmeśvareśvarī //

You are known as Bhāratī (voice, speech, words; the patron Goddess of these, Goddess Sarasvatī; a poetic composition which is used to describe anger, horrors and terrifying circumstances). You are an embodiment of supreme bliss, beatitude and felicity, and you always remain in that state. You are transcendental as well as mundane; you are non-dual as well as have a dual form, one as the trancendental supreme Authority and the other as a Goddess having a form and attributes. You are present in all the divisions of the day (i.e. you are always present everywhere at anytime). You are charming and attractive as well as the patron Goddess of passions and desires, called Kāmeśvarī (92).

अचिन्त्याऽचिन्त्यमहिमा (570) दुर्लेखा कनकप्रभा।
कूष्माण्डी धनरत्नाढ्या सुगन्धा गन्धदायिनी।। 93।।
acintyā'cintyamahimā (570) durlekhā kanakaprabhā /
kūṣmāṇḍī dhanaratnāḍhyā sugandhā gandhadāyinī //

You are beyond the reach of thoughts and imagination. [570] Your glories, majesties and fame are so great that they cannot be understood, comprehended or even be imagined by the mind, thought and intellect. You are beyond the purview of the faculty of sight (i.e. you are so subtle and sublime that you cannot be seen ordinarily because you are not something that is so gross enough that eyes can see them). Your radiance is like that of gold. You are known as Kūṣamāṇḍī (a sweet made from pumpkin, considered a very delicious dessert which is succulent and cool; it means that you have these virtues of sweetness and providing cool comfort to your devotees). You are rich with wealth, gems and various types of jewelry (i.e. you have no dearth of material comforts and objects of prosperous life, and is therefore capable of giving them to your devotees as largesse). You have an auspicious fragrance emanating from your body and you bestow a pleasant ambiance and aura of divinity and auspiciousness, well being and happiness to the surroundings by your sweet and auspicious presence[1]. Literally, you spread your divine fragrance everywhere you go, the whole atmosphere is which with the sweet perfume of your divine presence is felt (93).

[Note :—[1]This last word Gandhadāyinī can be understood if we consider the 'smelly' presence of a 'stinking person' who probably has not taken a bath for a long time in hot countries like India; it is a metaphor for a person who is dirty in all respects. Surely, the presence of such a disgusting person lends the atmosphere an unholy and repulsive ambience as compared to the auspicious presence of a noble person who keeps himself clean and effuses a divine aroma around him. The words 'fragrance or perfume or scent' are only metaphors for the divinity, holiness and auspiciousness emanating from the Goddess, and not some kind of physical scent coming out from her body.]

त्रिविक्रमपदोद्भता धनुष्पाणिः शिरोहया।
सुदुर्लभा (580) धनाध्यक्षा धन्या पिंगललोचना।। 94।।
trivikramapadodbhatā dhanuṣpāṇiḥ śirohayā /
sudurlabhā (580) dhanādhyakṣā dhanyā piṃgalalocanā //

You have your origin in the holy and divine feet of Lord Trivikrama[1] (i.e. Lord Vāmana, the dwarf mendicant incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu). [That is, you are the holy river Ganges which has its origin from the nails of the toes of Viṣṇu's feet according to mythology.] You hold a bow in your hands. You have supreme modesty, prudence, and humility. [580] You are difficult to access by the mind; you are difficult to comprehend and think about. You preside over the wealth and prosperity in this world (i.e. all good fortunes and good luck in this world are under your command; it is you who can bestow well being to the creatures of the world, or those who are your devotees). You are most honorable, laudable, glorious, prosperous, auspicious, lucky, blessed, blissful and worthy of praise. You have yellow-tinged eyes (like that of a yellow coloured lotus) (94).

[Note :—[1]Trivikrama—the word 'Tri' is a prefix meaning 'three', and 'Vikrama' means 'brave, courageous, bold, heroic, powerful, valorous, valiant, strong, best and excellent'. It also refers to Viṣṇu because he has all these qualities. According to the Purāṇaic concept, Trivikrama refers to Lord Viṣṇu in his manifestation as the dwarf mendicant called Vāmana who had begged the demon king Bali for land measuring three steps as charity. When Bali had agreed, Vāmana revealed his true identity as Viṣṇu, who was the Virāṭ Puruṣa who encompassed the whole creation in his own body. So, in one foot Viṣṇu measured the whole earth, in the second, the whole sky, and in the third the king's head was measured, symbolically defeating and subjugating him. So, Trivikram refers to the Virāṭ Puruṣa or Lord Viṣṇu from whose navel even the creator Brahmā was produced aloft a divine lotus with a long stem, and the holy river Ganges emerged from the toe nails of his divine feet.

According to Vedas, this Virāṭ Puruṣa is a manifestation of the supreme, transcendental, attributeless, all-pervading and all-encompassing authority of the universe, known as Brahma. Ṛg Veda, 10/90/4, states that this Brahma has three legs (Tri) established in the heavens. The macrocosmic male, called Puruṣa, is its first manifestation; from this Puruṣa came into being this creation consisting of 'those who eat food' (the living creatures of the zoological realm) and 'those who do not eat' (the plants and vegetables of the botanical realm). These three—the Virāṭ Puruṣa, the living creatures and the non-living things—formed the 3 legs of Brahma.]

भ्रान्तिः प्रभावती दीप्तिः पंकजायतलोचना।
आद्या हृत्कमलोद्भूता परामाता (590) रणप्रिया।।95।।
bhrāntiḥ prabhāvatī dīptiḥ paṃkajāyatalocanā /
ādyā hṛtkamalodbhūtā parāmātā (590) raṇapriyā //

You create delusions, illusions and hallucinations in the world. You are potent, effective, influential, powerful, dignified, majestic and magnanimous (i.e. these good virtues create a divine aura of glory around you). You are glorious, radiant, splendorous and resplendent with divinity and sublimity. Your eyes are like a lotus flower. You are from the beginning of creation, are primary and primordial. You have been born from the lotus symbolically present in the heart of the Virāṭ Puruṣa (Viṣṇu), or from the lotus-like heart of the supreme authority of the creation. [590] You are the transcendental, supreme mother of the creation. You do not shy away from battle (i.e. you are bold, courageous, valiant and steadfast in war or while facing your enemies who are representatives of the evil, wicked, sinful and pervert forces in this creation; you have the potential and powers to trounce such forces in the battlefield; you are not afraid of battle but literally long for it, love it; it is a game or sport for you, because by playing it you are able to trounce unholiness and unrighteousness in this world, and uphold goodness and righteousness instead) (95).

सत्क्रिया गिरिजा नित्यशुद्धा पुष्पनिरन्तरा।
दुर्गा कात्यायनी चण्डी चर्चिका शान्तविग्रहा (600)।।96।।
satkriyā girijā nityaśuddhā puṣpanirantarā /
durgā kātyāyanī caṇḍī carcikā śāntavigrahā //

You are involved in doing righteous deeds. You are called Girijā (the daughter of Himavān, the legendary mythological king of the Himālayas; here referring to his daughter Pārvatī who is the divine consort of Śiva). You are always eternally modest, immaculate, pure, chaste and uncorrupt. You are known as Puṣpa Nirantarā (i.e. you are constantly present as the essence of flowers, you are like their nectar and fragrance; you always sit on a flower or hold it in your hand). You are goddess Durgā (the Goddess who rides a lion), Kātyāyanī (another name of Durgā; a women belonging to the Kaṭa clan; the wife of sage Katyāyana who was a Vedic period sage; the second wife of sage Yajñavalkya), Caṇḍī (the form that Goddess Durgā took when she slayed the demon called Mahiṣāsura), and Carcikā (another name of Durgā; one who is popular, much talked about and a household deity worshipped by everyone).[600] You have a peaceful, calm, tranquil and serene form or image (96).

हिरण्यवर्णा रजनी जगन्मन्त्रप्रवर्तिका। मन्दराद्रिनिवासा च शारदा स्वर्णमालिनी।।97।।
hiraṇyavarṇā rajanī jaganmantrapravartikā /
mandarādrinivāsā ca śāradā svarṇamālinī //

Your countenance is golden, hence you are known as Hiraṇya, and it resembles the colour of turmeric. Hence you are also known as Rajanī. You are dark complexioned like the night (Rajanī). You are the divine and supreme advisor of the world as well as the one who has created it and inspires it. You reside on the mountain called Mandāra (which was used by the Gods and the demons to churn the ocean during the legendary churning to get Amṛta, according to legend). You are known as Śāradā (Goddess Sarasvatī, the Goddess of wisdom and learning) and Durgā (the Goddess who rides upon a lion and who killed the demon Mahiṣāsura). You wear a garland made of gold (97).

[Note :— The word Rajanī has two connotations—turmeric and night. There is no contradiction in the two meanings here. As Pārvatī, the Goddess is known as 'Gaurī' or the fair complexioned one, and as 'Mahākālī' in the present case in the battlefield of Puṣkara, she has a dark complexion. The same Goddess can assume not only these but any other form she wishes to assume. So she can be fair complexioned as well as dark complexioned at the same time.]

रत्नमाला रत्नगर्भा पृथ्वी विश्वप्रमाथिनी (610)।
पद्मासना पद्मनिभा नित्यतुष्टाऽमृतोद्भवा ।। 98 ।।
ratnamālā ratnagarbhā pṛthvī viśvapramāthinī (610) /
padmāsanā padmanibhā nityatuṣṭā'mṛtodbhavā //

You wear a garland made of precious stones and gems, and you have made possible the creation of all the precious stones that exist in this world (i.e. all gems and other things of value have been created by you). You are Mother Earth personified (because all gems and precious stones are found in earth). You are the grand mother of the whole creation. [610] You sit in a lotus-like Yoga posture called Padmāsana. You are known as Padmanābha or Goddess Lakṣmī. You are always contented and perpetually happy. The elixir of eternity and bliss called Amṛta has had its origin in you (i.e. you have created it yourself) (98).

धुवन्ती दुष्प्रकम्पा च सूर्यमाता दृषद्वती। महेन्द्रभगिनी माया (620) वरेण्यावरदर्पिता ।।99।।
dhuvantī duṣprakampā ca sūryamātā dṛṣadvatī /
mahendrabhaginī māyā (620) vareṇyāvaradarpitā //

You are known as Dhuvantī (i.e. you are very diligent in whatever you do; you pursue you target relentlessly and whole-heartedly, you never rest until you have accomplished success in your endeavours; you have perseverance and tenacity). You make those who are evil, pervert and vile shake, tremble and shiver in fear and awe of you. You are the mother of the Sun (i.e. you are Aditi, the mother of all Gods). You are the one who empowers the faculty of sight with the vital powers to see (or you make the sun shine). You are the sister of Mahendra (Indra, the king of Gods). [620] You are Māyā personified (i.e. you represent the delusion creating powers of the supreme Lord —see note to verse no. 35). You are the most exalted, supreme and revered Goddess who is worthy of praise and honour. You are endowed with all the best of blessings and good fortunes, and you are proud of your glorious virtues (99).

कल्याणी कमला रामा पञ्चभूतवरप्रदा। वाच्या वरेश्वरी नन्द्या दुर्जया (630) दुरतिक्रमा ।। 100 ।।
kalyāṇī kamalā rāmā pañcabhūtavarapradā /
vācyā vareśvarī nandyā durjayā (630) duratikramā //

Your names are Kalyāṇī (one who gives auspiciousness and welfare and personifies these virtues), Kamalā (Lakṣmī, the Goddess of wealth and prosperity and one who sits on Kamalā, the lotus flower) and Rāma (another name of Lakṣmī, the divine consort of Viṣṇu, who is supposed to be very charming and attractive). You are the one who infuses/injects life and vitality to the five basic elements of creation called the Pañca Bhūtas (which are space, wind, fire, water and earth), which would have remained inert and inactive without your being infused in them. You are the patron Goddess of speech (i.e. you are Goddess Sarasvatī as well as the Fire-God personified). You are the Goddess who gives boons and blessings. You are known as Nandyā (Goddess Durgā and Pārvatī; a celestial wish fulfilling cow called Kāmdhenu or Nandinī; it also means happiness and joy; an auspicious moment personified; the auspicious numbers 1, 6 and 11. In short, you are personification of all these good virtues). [630] You are invincible and insurmountable, inviolable, impregnable, impenetrable, beyond measure and the one who cannot be fathomed and crossed (100).

कालरात्रिर्महावेगा वीरभद्रहितप्रिया। भद्रकाली जगन्माता भक्तानां भद्रदायिनी।।101।।

kālarātrirmahāvegā vīrabhadrahitapriyā /
bhadrakālī jaganmātā bhaktānāṃ bhadradāyinī //

You are foreboding like the horrible night of doomsday, called Kālarātri. You have great swiftness and agility. You are dear to Vīrbhadra and take care of his well being and auspiciousness[1]. You are known as the great, auspiciousness Goddess called Kālī (literally, the black Goddess of death). You are mother of creation and a provider of auspiciousness, happiness and joy to your devotees (101).

[Note :—[1]'Vīrabhadra' is one of the followers of Lord Śiva who is regarded as his son and manifestation as well as a great devotee. Therefore, the Goddess, as Pārvatī who is the divine consort of Śiva, is the dear mother of Vīrabhadra, and naturally therefore takes care of him and his auspiciousness.]

करालापिंगलाकारा नामवेदा (640) महानदा।
तपस्विनी यशोदा च यथाध्वपरिवर्तिनी।।102।।

karālā piṃgalākārā nāmavedā (640) mahānadā /
tapasvinī yaśodā ca yathādhvaparivartinī //

You are formidable, terrifying and awe inspiring. You have a light yellow complexion (i.e. you are wheatish or fair in complexion like Goddess Lakṣmī). [640] Your name is honoured by the Vedas. You are like a great river called Mahā Nadī (that is, like a great river, you are a great herald of life, a harbinger of fertility and auspiciousness, the vital force that sustains and nourishes life on earth even as the water of the river supports life on the planet). You are the one who does Tapa (austerities and penances, observing self-restraint and rigorous righteous vows, and therefore you are aglow with a divine energy emanating from you like radiance from fire). You have manifested yourself as Yaśaoda (the mother of Lord Kṛṣṇa). You have the potential to bring about a change in even that which is unchangeable, immutable, indivisable and steady as well as uniform (102).

शंखिनी पद्मिनी सांख्या सांख्ययोगप्रवर्तिका।
चैत्री संवत्सरा (650) रुद्रा जगत्सम्पूरणीन्द्रजा।। 103।।
śaṃkhinī padminī sāṃkhyā sāṃkhyayogapravartikā /
caitrī saṃvatsarā (650) rudrā jagatsampūraṇīndrajā //

You are known as Śāṅkhinī (i.e. your voice resembles the resonating, loud and auspicious sound made by a conch called Śaṅkha) and Padminī (an excellent woman who is as beautiful as a Padma or a lotus flower). You follow the philosophy 'Sāṅkhya Yoga' (a school of Hindu philosophy propounded by sage Kapi—see note to verse no. 118) and are the origin of that philosophy. In the cosmic scale of time and vastness, you are as small as the month of Caitra (March-April approximately) on the one hand, [650] and a Samvatsara (a year) on the other. You are Rudrā (the divine consort of Rudra, the angry form of Lord Śiva; the word also means very angry, wrathful, vengeful, unrelenting, fierce, awful; the female aspect of cosmos which signifies those characteristics which are basically manly in nature—see also verse no. 83). You are the creator of the whole world (or the whole creation is your offspring) (103).

शुम्भारिः खेचरी खस्था कम्बुग्रीवा कलिप्रिया।
खरध्वजा खरारूढा (660) पराध्यर्ा परमालिनी।। 104।।
śumbhāriḥ khecarī khasthā kambugrīvā kalipriyā /
kharadhvajā kharārūḍhā (660) parārdhyā paramālinī //

You are the slayer of demon named Śumbha (i.e. you are a manifestation of Goddess Durgā who had killed demon Śumbha). You are the one who moves in the sky or heavens (i.e. you are a Goddess of the heavens) and are established there. Your neck is like a conch, hence you are also known as Kambu-Grīvā. [The word Kambu means conch and Grīvā means neck.] You love to engage the sinful in the battlefield. Your banner (or flag or standard) has the mark of a Khara (literally meaning a hoofed animal, e.g. a mule, a donkey; it also means the bird crow or crane; a type of a plant having thorns). [660] You are astride a Khara (mule or donkey or a similar hooved animal). You are independent of others (i.e. you are a sovereign, not under the influence of anyone, are not subjugated by anyone and do not have to serve them). You are auspicious, immaculate, clean and wise (104).

ऐश्वर्यरत्ननिलया विरक्ता गरुडासना। जयन्ती हृद्गुहा रम्या सत्त्ववेगा गणाग्रणी: ।।105।।
aiśvaryaratnanilayā viraktā garuḍāsanā /
jayantī hṛdguhā ramyā sattvavegā gaṇāgraṇīḥ //

You are treasury of precious jewels representing all those virtues which come under the combined definition of 'Aiśvarya' (i.e. those virtues which are marked by the following characteristics—having supremacy, sway, domain, glory, grandeur, majesty, greatness, omnipotence, superhuman powers, divine faculties as well as wealth, fortune, opulence and flourish). You are Virakta (a renunciate, detached from and dispassionate towards this world; a person who is indifferent to either sorrows and pains or happiness and joys). You sit astride the Garuḍa (the legendary eagle or heron which is the mount of Lord Viṣṇu; here referring to Goddess Lakṣmī who sits along with Viṣṇu on the Garuḍa). You are known as Jayantī (one who obtains victory; Goddess Durgā or Pārvatī; the word also means Turmeric). You reside in the cave-like heart of your devotees. You look pleasant, charming and attractive. Truthfulness and purity are your hallmarks and surging within you (like waves in an ocean of truthfulness and purity). You are the foremost, superior and prominent amongst all the various diverse manifestations of this creation (105).

संकल्पसिद्धा (670) साम्यस्था सर्वविज्ञानदायिनी।
कलिकल्मषहन्त्री च गुह्योपनिषदुत्तमा।। 106 ।।
saṃkalpasiddhā (670) sāmyasthā sarvavijñānadāyinī /
kalikalmaṣahantrī ca guhyopaniṣaduttamā //

[670] You successfully accomplish all your wishes and

determinations (i.e. you are unfailing in your efforts and the completion of your enterprises). You are in a stable, uniform, equanimous, equitable and an equilibrium state of existence which is unequivocal (i.e. it is uniformally and undoubtedly devoid of restlessness and agitation of any kind). You are a bestower of all knowledge, expertise, erudition, wisdom and scholarship. You are an eliminator of all the faults, blemishes, taints, flaws and shortcomings associated with the present era called Kali (which is the most corrupt of the 4 legendary periods into which one cycle of creation and destruction has been decided in mythology; it is generally the most evil era and is marked by unrighteousness and perversity). You are an embodiment of the most profound and the most secret tenets, axioms and maxims of the Upaniṣads which are an excellent repository of Jñāna (which is truthful knowledge, wisdom and erudition) (106).

नित्यदृष्टिः स्मृतिर्व्याप्तिः पुष्टिस्तुष्टिः (680) क्रियावती।
विश्वामरेश्वरेशाना भुक्तिर्मुक्तिः शिवामृता ।। 107 ।।
nityadṛṣṭiḥ smṛtirvyāptiḥ puṣṭistuṣṭiḥ (680) kriyāvatī /
viśvāmareśvareśānā bhuktirmuktiḥ śivāmṛtā //

You have an eternally open eye that sees everything without blinking even once. You have an excellent memory. You are omnipresent, immanent and all-pervading. You are strong, robust, sturdy, youthful and full of vitality and spirit. [680] You are contented and satisfied. You are the one who actually does everything in this world; you are an image of the world. You are the Goddess of the immortal Gods (i.e. even the great Gods also worship you; hence, you are superior to them). You are the one who enjoys the world (i.e. all the enjoyments and comforts of the world are meant to serve you); hence you are known as Bhukti. You are the personification of Mukti (liberation and deliverance, emancipation and salvation; that is you are the ultimate shelter for the creatures where they find eternal peace when they are successful in attaining refuge in your holy feet). [See also verse no. 41, 56 and 115.] You are Shivā (the divine consort of Lord Śiva; here referring to Pārvatī). You are Amṛta (the ambrosia of eternity and bliss) personified (107).

लोहिता सर्वमाता च भीषणा वनमालिनी (690)।
अनन्तशयनाऽनाद्या नरनारायणोद्भवा ।। 108 ।।

lohitā sarvamātā ca bhīṣaṇā vanamālinī (690)/
anantaśayanā'nādyā naranārāyaṇodbhavā //

You have a glowing red countenance like that of the planet Mars. You are the divine mother of all. You are terrifying, formidable, abominable and awe inspiring. [690] You are the divine consort of Lord Kṛṣṇa (Vana Mālī) You are engrossed in the eternal state of meditative sleep called the 'deep sleep state of consciousness' (which is called Yoganidrā and marked by bliss and peace, and is the third state of existence of pure consciousness—see also verse no. 45, 65 and 127). You are without any beginning. You are the divine mother from whom the twin deities called Nara and Nārāyaṇa[1] have been born (108).

[Note :—[1]Nara and Nārāyaṇa were two ancient sages said to be incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu. The words also mean Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna respectively. In terms of the Upaniṣads and metaphysics, Nara refers to the macrocosmic Male aspect of creation, called the Virāṭ Puruṣa, while Nārāyaṇa is the mythical manifestation of that Virāṭ Puruṣa as Viṣṇu, the sustainer of the creation, and from whom Lord Śiva the annihilator and Brahmā the creator were born.]

नृसिंही दैत्यमथिनी शंखचक्रगदाधरा। संकर्षणसमुत्पत्तिरम्बिकोपातसंश्रया।।109।।
nṛsiṃhī daityamathinī śaṃkhacakragadādharā /
saṃkarṣaṇasamutpattirambikopātasaṃśrayā //

You are the divine and subtle energy and powers of Lord Narasiṃha (the half man, half lion manifestation of Lord Viṣṇu to protect his devotee Prahlāda from his father Hiraṇyakaśipu's torments). You are the one who causes the demons and evil ones to be vanquished and trounced; you literally churn them, crush them and make them scatter. You hold a conch, a discus and mace in your hands. Saṅkarṣaṇa[1] has been born of you. You are known as Ambikā (literally, the divine mother). You reside very near to your devotees (as a doting mother would always like to be near her dear son so that she can extend her protection to him whenever the need arises) (109).

[Note :—[1]The word Saṅkarṣaṇa means—the power to pull and attract. It also refers to Balarāma, the elder brother of Kṛṣṇa, and also to one of the various communities in Hinduism. That is, you are the mother of Balarāma and are the creator of the power to attract anything. In fact, you personify that power itself.]

महाज्वाला महामूर्तिः (700) सुमूर्तिः सर्वकाभधुक्।
सुप्रभा सुतरां गौरी धर्मकामार्थमोक्षदा।। 110।।
mahājvālā mahāmūrtiḥ (700) sumūrtiḥ sarvakābhadhuk /
suprabhā sutarāṃ gaurī dharmakāmārthamokṣadā //

You are glorious with a divine radiance and stupendous splendour that effuses and radiates from you like a great fire burning fiercely (see also verse no. 78). [700] You are like a great image of that fire (i.e. your form is glorious, splendorous as well as huge and colossus besides beings stupendous and magnificent in all respects). This image or form of yours is auspicious and a provider of good luck. It bestows fulfillment of all desires and is ever so helpful and worthy of invocation in times of dire needs. It has an auspicious, excellent and beautiful radiance emanating from it like a divine glow which surrounds you like an effervescent halo from all sides. Hence, your glorious, magnificent and majestic form is also known as Gaurī (literally one with a fair complexion; here referring to Pārvatī, the divine consort of Śiva and considered as the mother of the universe who is most powerful and the primary source of the vibrant, vigorous, stupendous and powerful cosmic energy,—see also verse no. 53).You are a bestower of the three legendary fruits (a) Dharma—being righteous, virtuous and noble, (b) Kāma—having desires fulfilled and needs satisfied, and (c) Mokṣa—finding liberation and deliverance, emancipation and salvation (110).

भ्रूमध्यनिलयाऽपूर्वा प्रधानपुरुषा बली। महाविभूतिदा (710) मध्या सरोजनयनासना।।111।।
bhrūmadhyanilayā'pūrvā pradhānapuruṣā balī /
mahāvibhūtidā (710) madhyā sarojanayanāsanā //

You have a divine symbolic presence on the forehead of those who are wise and enlightened, at a point midway between their eyebrows[1]. You are matchless and without a precedent. You are the chief divine female aspect of creation (who is the counterpart of the divine male aspect called Puruṣa); You are that divine Goddess who is the counterpart of Viṣṇu, i.e. hence you are Lakṣmī. [710] You are strong, powerful and potent as well as the prowess, punch and majesty that is the hallmark of the supreme Authority. You can bestow great Vibhūti (the virtues of excellence, dignity, majesty, glory, prosperity, wealth, riches and powers) upon your devotees. You personify Madhya (literally meaning the one who follows the median path which is the opposite of extremes; the moderate aspect of creation having equanimity and evenness; one who is fair, just and equitable; in literature, a lady who has equal amounts of shame and modesty as well as lust and passion in her). You have lotus-like eyes, and when you sit, you do so in a lotus-like meditative posture (called Padmāsana in Yoga) (111).

[Note :—[1]This is the point where the so-called 'eye of wisdom' is located. According to Yoga tradition, this is the site of the Ājñā Cakra, or the subtle energy center which activates the powers of deep thought and penetrating insight.]

अष्टादशभुजा नाट्या नीलोत्पलदलप्रभा। सर्वशक्त्या समारुढा धर्माधर्मानुवर्जिता।।112।।

aṣṭādaśabhujā nāṭyā nīlotpaladalaprabhā /
sarvaśaktyā samāruḍhā dharmādharmānuvarjitā //

You have eighteen arms (as Goddess Durgā). You act your part to perfection. Your radiance and countenance are of the shade of a light blue lotus. You are almighty and omnipotent. You preside over the virtues of strength, powers and potentials (i.e. these are under your command). You are beyond the purview of 'Dharma and Adharma' (i.e. you remain neutral and neither the good deeds nor the bad deeds have any effect upon you) (112)

वैराग्यज्ञाननिरता निरालोका (720) निरिन्द्रिया। विचित्रगहना धीरा शाश्वतस्थानवासिनी।।113।।

vairāgyajñānaniratā nirālokā (720) nirindriyā /
vicitragahanā dhīrā śāśvatasthānavāsinī //

You are ever engrossed in pursuing Jñāna (truthful knowledge and wisdom, having scholarship and expertise in the knowledge contained in the scriptures) as well as observing the principles of Vairāgya (renunciation, dispassion, detachment and indifference to this world and its material objects of comfort which are delusionary and entrapping by nature. Further, you are also not mislead into being haughty and arrogant by thinking that you are an expert and possess Jñāna). [720] You are invisible and don't have a gross body having sense organs. You are adorned by strange ornaments (such as skulls, severed heads, swords etc.) in the battlefield. You are patient, courageous, forbearing and fortitudinous. You dwell in a place (the heaven) which is eternal, everlasting, perpetual and immortal (113).

स्थानेश्वरी निरानन्दा त्रिशूलवरधारिणी। अशेषदेवतामूर्तिदेवतापरदेवता (730)॥114॥

sthāneśvarī nirānandā triśūlavaradhāriṇī /
aśeṣadevatāmūrtidevatāparadevatā (730) //

You are the Lord and unquestioned mistress of the realm (i.e. the entire creation). You remain in eternal and perpetual bliss which is everlasting. You hold an excellent trident in your hand. [730] You embody all the Gods; you are a personification of all the Gods as well as the supreme, transcendental, sublime and subtle Lord (called Brahma) who is the Lord of all Gods (114).

गणात्मिका गिरेः पुत्री निशुम्भविनिपातिनी। अवर्णा वर्णरहिता निर्वर्णा बीजसम्भवा॥115॥

gaṇātmikā gireḥ putrī niśumbhavinipātinī /
avarṇā varṇarahitā nirvarṇā bījasambhavā //

You are very dear to your devotees. You are the daughter called Girijā or Pārvatī of the king of mountains called Himavāna (see verse nos. 43 and 132 also). You are the eliminator or crusher or vanquisher of demon Niśumbha. You cannot be described in anyway. You have no restrictions of caste, creed, class, colour and race (or, everyone can worship you and you are the mother of all; you are not limited by such worldly considerations, and neither do you have any preference for any fixed colour or countenance of the skin; all are equal in your eyes, and all have equal right to have your access). You are the one who gives liberation and deliverance to the soul of the creature (from this mundane, artificial and entrapping world of birth and death—see also verse no. 41 and 107). It is you who has made it possible for the seeds of a plant to germinate into a new shoot (i.e. you represent that subtle spark of life inherently present hidden in a seed that helps it to produce a new sprout which is indicative of its powers to create a new life and a new life form—see also verse no. 65) (115).

अनन्तवर्णाऽनन्यस्था शंकरी (740) शान्तमानसा।
अगोत्रा गोमती गोप्त्री गुह्यरूपा गुणान्तरा॥116॥
anantavarṇā'nanyasthā śaṃkarī (740) śāntamānasā /
agotrā gomatī goptrī guhyarūpā guṇāntarā //

You have limitless colours, hues and countenance indicating that you belong to all the castes, creeds, classes and races in the world. You remain in a state which is unique and complete in all respects;

you are intimate to the entity which is endless and infinite (a reference to Brahma). [740] You are known as Śaṅkarī (the divine consort of Lord Śiva, also known as Śaṅkara). You have a calm, peaceful, tranquil, and serene heart and mind. You do not have any fixed race, clan, linage, caste and creed and neither do you have any relationship with anyone in this mortal world. You have a temperament resembling that of a cow (i.e. you are calm, helping, docile, holy, revered, benevolent and provide nourishment to the world even as the cow gives milk for the benefit of the creatures of this world; the cow also gives dung which is dried into cakes and used as fuel for fire and smeared as a paste to purify the ground; the urine of a cow is also considered holy and has medicinal qualities). You are a protector of all. You are mysterious and strange as well as beyond all Guṇas (attributes, virtues, qualities, characteristic and adjectives that define a person) (116).

गोश्रीर्गव्यप्रिया गौरी गणेश्वरनमस्कृता।
सत्यमात्रा (750) सत्यसन्धा त्रिसन्ध्या सन्धिवर्जिता।। 117।।
gośrīrgavyapriyā gaurī gaṇeśvaranamaskṛtā /
satyamātrā (750) satyasandhā trisandhyā sandhivarjitā //

You like (or are fond of) products (such as milk, curd, butter and butter milk) produced by the honourable cow. You are Gaurī (Pārvatī, the faire complexioned divine consort of Śiva—see verse nos. 53, 110, 115 also). Lord Gaṇeśa[1], who is himself worshipped, honoured and adored by all the Gods, bows before you to pay his obeisance to you. [750] You are the only truth, are absolutely truthful and nothing but the truth. You represent the meeting point or the coordinates where all the truths converge. You are an embodiment of the religious sacrament called Sandhyā[2] done 3 times a day—at morning, noon and evening times. At the same time, you do not have any joints or junction points—i.e. you are seamless, smooth, one complete whole which has no beginning and end which would require any soldering or welding together. [See also verse no. 144.] You are unequivocally one, complete, immutable, indivisible and uniform (117).

[Note :—[1]Gaṇeśa is also known as Vināyaka, the son of Lord Śiva and Pārvatī. He is said to be the wisest and most honoured of the Hindu Gods and is always worshipped in the beginning of any endeavour or enterprise, whether it pertains to the mundane worldly affairs or to the spiritual realm. This is done to invoke his blessings which preempt any evil forces from throwing a spanner in the wheel of the successful completion of the exercise.

[2]Sandhya is a sacrament observed by Hindus, and is the ritual done 3 times a day. Basically, it is a form of prayer, and any divine Mantra is chanted while offering oblations to the chosen deity. It is done three times a day—during the morning hours at dawn, during noon and during the evening hours at dusk or twilight. The word 'Sandhi' means a joint, a junction. Hence, the word 'Sandhyā' is a ritual done at the junction point of the night and the day, i.e. at dawn; during the junction point of the forenoon and the afternoon, the noon; and during the junction point of the day and the night, at twilight or dusk.]

सर्ववादाश्रया सांख्या सांख्ययोगसमुद्भवा।
असंख्येयाऽप्रमेयाख्या शून्या शुद्धकुलोद्भवा (760)॥118॥

sarvavādāśrayā sāṃkhyā sāṃkhyayogasamudbhavā /
asaṃkhyeyā'prameyākhyā śūnyā śuddhakulodbhavā (760) //

You are the repository of all philosophies, all schools of thought, all facts and all the views expressed by the scriptures (i.e. you personify all of them at once; you are an embodiment of all the philosophies and schools of thought, all the facts and views expressed by the scriptures). You are an eternal abode of all the creatures of creation. You are rationalism personified. Your origin lies in the 'Sāṅkhya Yoga'[1] (which was propounded and expounded by sage Kapila, and which says that the creation has its origin in the cosmic Puruṣa, the macrocosmic Male, and Śakti, the macrocosmic energy. The union of these two has resulted in the creation of this universe). You have countless form and virtues. You cannot be wholly and truthfully understood by any of the organs of perception (i.e. they are not competent enough to understand and comprehend you, they cannot fathom your greatness, majesty, glories and divinity). You are like a void of space, i.e. you are deep, fathomless, measureless, without a beginning and an end, and from where nothing escapes because it is without any boundaries. Further, everything has its origin in space; therefore you represent space because you are the mother of the entire creation which has its origin in you. [760] You have taken birth or have manifested yourself in a noble and uncorrupt clan or family (here referring to king Janaka who was the father of Sītā, the original form of Goddess Mahākālī who is being worshipped here by Śrī Rāma using 1008 names to honour her) (118).

[Note :—[1]Sāṅkhya is one of the six great schools of Indian philosophy. It was first propounded by sage Kapila. It describes the origin of the cosmos from Brahmā who created the macrocosmic first Male called Puruṣa and his female counterpart, the Prakṛti (Mother Nature), who are the basic cause of this vast and myriad creation. The individual male and female human beings are the microcosmic forms of that macrocosmic Puruṣa and Prakṛti. It is their union which resulted in this cosmos. Their offspring were—Ahaṅkāra (pride, ego), Buddhi (intelligence, wisdom, mind), the five perceptions (of smell, hearing, touch, taste and sight), forming the subtle body of the creature, the five elements (space, wind, fire, water, earth), the ten sense organs (five organs of perception—ear, nose, tongue, eye and skin, and five organs of action—hand, leg, mouth, anus and genitals), and the mind-heart complex called the 'Mana', which together formed the gross body of the creature, and the invisible Ātmā which resides in the causal body. These are the twenty five basic constituents of creation. It further postulates that Brahma created Nature (cosmos) because it allowed itself to be covered or mired by the three Guṇas—'Sat' meaning righteousness and virtuousness which are the best and noblest of qualities, 'Raja' meaning worldly passions and desires which are the medium or mediocre qualities leading to worldly desires, and 'Tama' meaning evils, sins and other mean mentalities leading to perversions and vices. The Puruṣa, though he remains aloof, still gets shackled or attached to Prakṛti, the creation, because of these three Guṇas which act as ropes or strings that tie him down. Breaking his habits is tantamount to liberation and deliverance from this bondage, and it is called Mukti. The three Guṇas are the causes of the myriad temperaments, natures, thought patterns and behaviours of all the creatures, because they have all these three qualities or virtues in them, though they vary in ratio or proportion. These three Guṇas are also present in Mother Nature, giving rise to a populace which is so varied and diametrically opposite to each other, even virtually getting at each other's throat, because of the infinite possibilities created by their mixing in different proportions to mould the innate nature, inclinations and temperaments of a creature.

Further, this school of philosophy says that there are five elementary Bhūtas in this creation—they are the earth, water, fire, wind and space which, in different permutations and combinations, form all the creatures who have a body. A creature, it says, has eleven organs—five organs of perception (ears, nose, eyes, tongue and skin), five organs of action (hands, legs, mouth, anus and genitals) and one organ called the Mana (mind and heart). See also Canto 11, note to verse no. 42 and canto 26, note to verse no. 17. In fact, the entire canto 11 is dedicated to this philosophy of 'Sāṅkhya Śāstra'.]

बिन्दुनादसमुत्पत्तिः शम्भुवामा शशिप्रभा। विसंगा भेदरहिता मनोज्ञा मधुसूदनी।।119।।

bindunādasamutpattiḥ śambhuvāmā śaśiprabhā /
visaṃgā bhedarahitā manojñā madhusūdanī //

You have emerged from the nucleus or the epicenter of the cosmic sound vibration called Nāda[1] (which is heard by Yogīs or ascetics during meditative practices and whose word symbol is OM which is a word used as a synonym for Brahma (see also verse no. 32). You are the divine consort who sits to the left of Śambhu (Lord Śiva). [Hindu wife sits on the left of her husband; that is why Pārvatī, who has manifested herself as Mahākālī, is depicted here as sitting to the left of Śambhu.] Your glorious halo is like a radiance which is bright, calm, cool and soothing like that of the moon's light. You prefer to remain alone and secluded, and nothing, no body, accompanies you. [That is, you prefer solitude and serenity.] You have no schism, doubts, confusions and differences within you (i.e. you are non dual, one single, immutable and unequivocally without any division or fraction). You are charming and pleasing for the heart and the mind, so much so that they are enthralled and captivated by you. You are the female aspect or the divine energy of Madhusūdana (Lord Viṣṇu; you are a personification respectively of Goddess Lakṣmī and the divine cosmic energy that sustains and nourishes life in the universe) (119).

[Note :—The word 'Nāda Bindu' is the name of an entire Upaniṣad belonging to the Ṛg Veda tradition, an English version of which has been published separately by this humble author. Essentially it states that the cosmic sound in the universe, called Nāda, is at the core or Bindu, which literally means a focal point, of the entire creation. It originates in Brahma, which is like that Bindu or point, and spreads out from this focal point like the ripples on the surface of calm waters of a lake when any pebble is thrown in it. This sound is like a cosmic orchestra being played by Brahma. The energy emanating from Brahma takes the form of waves in ether which pervades the entire space of the sky, and these waves produce the sound called Nāda. This energy of Brahma is conceptualised as manifesting itself as the great Goddess with whatever name she is known. In our present context, the Goddess is named Mahākālī.]

महाश्रीः श्रीसमुत्पत्ति (770) स्तमःपारे प्रतिष्ठिता।
त्रितत्त्वमाता त्रिविधा सुसूक्ष्मपद संश्रया।। 120।।

mahāśrīḥ śrīsamutpatti (770) stamaḥpāre pratiṣṭhitā /
tritattvamātā trividhā susūkṣmapada saṃśrayā //

You are great Goddess of prosperity, wealth, fame, glory, majesty and opulence. [770] In fact, this great Goddess known as Śrī (or Lakṣmī) has her origin in you. [That is, the patron Goddess of worldly prosperity and wellbeing, Goddess Lakṣmī, has her origin in Pārvatī who is the supreme grandmother Goddess of the entire creation, from whom all the Gods and the Goddesses have emerged or taken birth; you are a personification of that great Goddess.] You are established beyond the reach of 'Tama' which is the negative trait present in creation (leading to all types of evils, sins, perversions, misdemeanours and all sorts of lowly and mean activities. That is, you are beyond anything which is corrupt, unholy, dark and lowly; you are untouched by negative traits). You are the mother/creator of the three essential ingredients which foster life in its gross form—earth, water and fire. You represent a triad of the various aspects of creation[1]. [See also verse no. 129.] You are subtle and stay in that form (i.e. you are not gross, though some of the aspects of the triad referred to herein above have a mundane, gross connotation as opposed to sublime and spiritual values). [See also verse nos. 129.] (120)

[Note :—[1]The Trividyā or the triad of knowledge pertaining to creation has many hues or shades of meanings as follows—(i) It refers to the legendary rewards of righteousness—'Artha' or material well being and prosperity, 'Dharma' or possessing righteous qualities, being virtuous and noble, and 'Kāma' or being successful in fulfilling all desires; (ii) the creation, sustenance and annihilation of creation; (iii) the 3 qualities called 'Sat' or noble, 'Raja' or mundane and 'Tama' or mean and base; (iv) the 3 classes of society—viz. Brāhmin or the learned class who are generally teachers and priests, Kṣatriyas or the warrior class, and Vaiśyas or the trading and farming class; (v) the 3 periods of time—the past, the present and the future; (vi) the 3 states of existence of pure consciousness—the waking state called 'Jāgrata', the dreaming state called 'Svapna', and the deep sleep state of existence called 'Suṣupta' of the creature; (vii) the 3 types of bodies of a creature—(a) the gross body consisting of the 5 organs of perception, e.g. eyes, nose, tongue, ears and skin, as well as the 5 organs of action, e.g. the hand, the leg, the mouth, the anus, and the excretory organs, (b) the subtle body consisting of the mind intellect complex, and (c) the causal body consisting of the pure conscious Ātmā. (viii) The 'Trividyā' is that knowledge which is enshrined in the three Vedas—the Ṛg, the Sāma and the Yajur. This Trividyā has been dealt widely in the different Upaniṣads. See also Canto 3, verse no. 38.]

शान्त्यातीता मलातीता निर्विकारा निराश्रया।
शिवाख्या चित्रनिलया (780) शिवज्ञानस्वरूपिणी।। 121।।
śāntyātītā malātītā nirvikārā nirāśrayā /
śivākhyā citranilayā (780) śivajñānasvarūpiṇī //

You are eternally calm, peaceful and tranquil. You are beyond the reach of all the faults, blemishes, taints and other negative traits and shortcomings. You are attributeless and formless, without any faults and perversions, disorders and deformations which are associated with this artificial, mundane and deceptive world. You do not have, and neither do you need, any shelter or support for your self (because you are self sustaining and self sufficient). Śiva is one of your appellations; you bring to the fore and notify the glorious fame of Lord Śiva (as the annihilator of this creation) and you are an explanation of how Lord Śiva brings to an end this creation at the time of doomsday (because it is through you, as the divine cosmic energy of the universe, that he brings about the end of this world; the greatest proof of this is your present state as Mahākālī). That is why 'Śiva' is affixed to your name, and you are called Śivākhyā. [780] You are an abode of the myriad varieties and diverse forms that the creation has taken (i.e. you are an image of this multifarious world with all its charming colours and innumerable variety of creatures). You are an image and an embodiment of the truthful and eternal Jñāna (wisdom, knowledge, erudition and enlightenment) which is truthful, holy, beautiful, magnificent and auspicious (121).

दैत्यदानवनिर्मात्री काश्यपी कालकर्णिका। शास्त्रयोनिः क्रियामूर्तिश्चतुर्वर्गप्रदर्शिका।। 122।।
daityadānavanirmātrī kāśyapī kālakarṇikā /
śāstrayoniḥ kriyāmūrtiścaturvargapradarśikā //

You are the one who has created the fierce and formidable ogres, Śaitānas, devils and demons. [No wonder in it, because if the Goddess is the mother of creation, then it naturally follows that she produces everything that constitutes creation, and that includes the bad elements as much as the good ones.] You are the divine consort of Kaśyapa (who is one of the Prajāpatis or guardians of creation and was the husband of the thirteen daughters of Prajāpati Dakṣa. One of his wives was Aditi, the mother of the Gods. He was the father of both the demons as well as the Gods). You are known as Kāla Karṇikā[1]. You are the divine womb where all the scriptures were symbolically conceived, nourished and had taken shape, and from which they were all born or revealed. You are a shining example, literally an image, of the 'philosophy of doing deeds' (i.e. you do things without getting attached either to the deed/action or the results of that deed/action, i.e. you are dispassionate, detached and indifferent to whatever you have to do because of the demands of time and circumstance), and as such you show the path (by setting an example) of how to do deeds and take actions with dispassion and detachment to all the 4 sections or classes of the society[2] (122).

[Note :—[1]The word 'Kāla Karṇikā has two parts—Kāla meaning (a) death, and (b) time and circumstance, while Karṇikā has many connotations—it literally means (i) the second finger or the middle finger of the hand, (ii) the ornament of the ear, e.g. the ear ring, (iii) the tip of an elephant's trunk, (iv) a cluster of lotus flowers, (v) a pen or writing instrument, (vi) and a stiff stem. Hence, one single word Karṇikā refers to all these virtues as being symbolically present in the Goddess—such as she is the foremost and most prominent amongst the God, she is not only the creator of Nāda, the cosmic sound represented by OM and representing Brahma, but also an adornment or quality of that divine word, she is as sensitive and agile as the tip of an elephant's trunk because the elephant can pick up even a small thing like a needle or a small flower lying on the ground with the tip of its trunk, she is as beautiful, uncorrupt and divine as the lotus flower, not one but an entire cluster, she is wise, scholarly and erudite as a scholarly author symbolised by the writing instrument, and she is unbending, unrelenting, steadfast and rigid in her principles as the stiff branch or the stem of the tree. So, the Goddess is that prominent force of Nature and creation which controls everything.

[2]The four classes or sections into which the society has been classified are the following—(a) Brāhmins, who are the senior most and the learned class of people, generally those who are teachers, moral guides and priests, (b) Kṣatriyas, who are assigned the task of extending protection to the other 3 classes and to maintain law and order, (c) Vaiśyas, who are the trading community taking care of commerce, farming and animal husbandry; their main task is to provide for the comfort and necessities of life of the other 3 classes, and (d) Śūdra, who are the service class of people doing the daily routine chores so that their senior brethrens are freed from humdrums of daily life and can divert and concentrate their respective energies to the respective areas of their operation.]

नारायणी नवोद्भूता कौमुदी (790) लिंगधारिणी।
कामुकी ललिता तारा परापरविभूतिदा।। 123।।
nārāyaṇī navodbhūtā kaumudī (790) liṃgadhāriṇī /
kāmukī lalitā tārā parāparavibhūtidā //

You are known as Nārāyaṇī (the divine female aspect of Nārāyaṇa, Lord Viṣṇu or the Virāṭ Puruṣa). You are always in your pristine, uncorrupt, divine and immaculate form, appearing to be as fresh as a newly born (who is free from any fault associated with this world). [790] You are known as Kaumudī[1]. You are also known as Liṅga Dhāriṇī (literally, you have a divine, subtle and ethereal form of a corporeal gross body; you are the subtle Mother Nature personified; you are the divine deity representing the powerful forces of creation as embodied in Lord Śiva's symbol, the 'Liṅga', and you wear all the virtues and powers that Lord Śiva has). You are known as Kāmukī (i.e. you personify the virtues of passions, desires, yearnings and worldly lust. In other words, you have a great desire and longing to help your devotees and take care of them, being a doting and a passionate lover of your devotees as their divine mother and as the consort of Lord Śiva who is very kind and magnanimous towards his devotees and worshippers), Lalitā (i.e. one who is beloved, handsome, beautiful, charming, attractive, lovely, elegant, sweet, delicate and light), and Tārā (a metaphor for anyone who shines and has prominence in his field; literally meaning a star, the pupil of the eye. Here meaning you are the remarkable glory, majesty and magnificence of the world personified; you are the most important, prominent and significant element in creation having the same importance as the pupil of the eye has for a man, for it is the pupil through which the world is illuminated and made visible to the man who would be lost in the former if he were blind). You bestow divine, auspicious, supreme and most majestic of glories, opulence, sway, dominion, grandeur, greatness, omnipotence, powers and faculties to your devotees (or those who are righteous, noble, virtuous and good in this creation) (123).

[Note :—[1]'Kaumudī' means the light of the full moon, glorious and shining with a bright glow; it also means expounding or elucidation upon some profound philosophy or principle enshrined and propounded in the scriptures. It also refers to the water lily or a red coloured lotus flower which is considered divine, holy, auspicious and beautiful. A slight variation of this word Kaumudī is 'Kaumodī' which means the mace of Lord Viṣṇu. That is, the Goddess personifies these qualities—she is as soothing and comforting as well as glorious, bright and radiant as the moon light of a full moon against the background of the dark night representing ignorance, delusions and all the miseries and sorrows of this existence; she symbolises happiness, joy, bliss and felicity. The Goddess has the erudition, scholarship and wisdom needed to expound on the knowledge contained in the scriptures. She is as beautiful, divine, auspicious, uncorrupt and holy as the water lily or the red lotus flower. She is like the potential powers, strength, invincible force and great punch represented by the mace of Lord Viṣṇu.]

परान्तजातमहिमा वाडवा वामलोचना। सुभद्रा देवकी (800) सीता वेदवेदांगपारगा।।124।।

parāntajātamahimā vāḍavā vāmalocanā /
subhadrā devakī (800) sītā vedavedāṃgapāragā //

You possess immense and stupendous glories, dignity, grandeur, majesty, importance and greatness which are very remarkable. You are like the fierce and great fire of the ocean bed, called Vāḍava, which can virtually dry up the ocean and keeps it perpetually warm, helping to sustain the entire marine ecosystem. You are angry, and this anger of yours (against the evil and unrighteous demons who had been tormenting the creatures and have just been slayed by you) is showing in your crooked and vengeful eyes (which are glowing red with anger and spewing fire of wrath, retribution and punishment upon them). You have manifested yourself as Subhadra (the sister of Lord Kṛṣṇa), [800] as Devakī (the mother of Lord Kṛṣṇa), and as Sītā (the divine wife of Śrī Rāma). You are beyond the reach (comprehension and understanding) of the Vedas and the sub-Vedas called Vedāṅga (i.e. the scriptures are unable to fathom your greatness and virtues, your grandeur and majesty; you are so remarkable, stupendous, magnificent and fascinating that the scriptures fail to describe you even a fraction of you; they fail to measure you) (124).

मनस्विनी मन्युमाता महामन्युसमुद्भवा। अमृत्युरमृतास्वादा पुरुहूता पुरुप्लुता।।125।।

manasvinī manyumātā mahāmanyusamudbhavā /
amṛtyuramṛtāsvādā puruhūtā purupIutā //

You are wise, erudite, scholarly, sagacious, adroit and intelligent. You are the mother of Manu[1] (the first fourteen males who were the sons of Brahmā, the creator, and the great ancestors from whom the entire human race has descended; also meaning Viṣṇu, the macrocosmic Virāṭ Puruṣa of the Upaniṣads; the mind-intellect complex representing wisdom and intelligence, the power to think and contemplate). You are very angry and vehement with wrath as Mahākālī in the battlefield (against the evil ones, the demons). You do not die (i.e. you are immortal and cannot be killed or trounced in the battlefield by your enemies) because you have tasted the ambrosia of eternity called Amṛta. You are the Queen of Gods. [The word 'Puruhuta' means Indra, the king of Gods. Therefore, since the Goddess is a female, the word 'queen' is most appropriate.] You have an invisible, ethereal form (body), and you live in the subtle realm of the heavens (125).

[Note :—[1]The 14 Manus of mythology, who were the forefathers of the entire creation, are the following—(i) Svāyam, (ii) Svaricoṣa, (iii) Uttama, (iv) Tamas, (v) Raivata, (vi) Cākṣuṣa, (vii) Vaivasvata, (viii) Sāvarṇī, (ix) Dakṣa Sāvarṇī, (x) Brahma Sāvarṇī, (xi) Dharma Sāvarṇī, (xii) Rudra Sāvarṇī, (xiii) Deva Sāvarṇī, and (xiv) Indra Sāvarṇī.]

अशोच्या (810) भिन्नविषया हिरण्यरजतप्रिया।
हिरण्या राजती हैमी हेमाभरण भूषिता।। 126 ।।
aśocyā (810) bhinnaviṣayā hiraṇyarajatapriyā /
hiraṇyā rājatī haimī hemābharaṇa bhūṣitā //

[810] You do not have any grief, regret or worries. You can think on different subjects or topics simultaneously. You are different from others; you are an authority that is very different from the rest and you are subject that is distinctly unique and apart. You like gold and silver (i.e. you love the best of virtues and qualities in this creation, represented by these precious metals). Your divine countenance is glowing like the radiance of gold and silver (which are yellow and white in colour, i.e. you are fair complexioned). You are adorned by heavy ornaments made of gold (i.e. you have no shortage of worldly riches, and therefore you can give them to your devotes with a free hand) (126).

विभ्राजमाना दुर्ज्ञेया ज्योतिष्टोमफलप्रदा। महानिद्रा (820) समुद्भूतिर्बलीन्द्रा सत्यदेवता।।127।।
vibhrājamānā durjñeyā jyotiṣṭomaphalapradā /
mahānidrā (820) samudbhūtirbalīndrā satyadevatā //

You are endowed with special auspiciousness, glory, majesty and splendour. You cannot be comprehended or understood, measured or fathomed. You can give the great reward which is obtained by doing the great fire sacrifice known as 'Jyotiṣṭoma Yajña'. [820] You appear to be eternally asleep in the great, eternal sleep called Mahā Nidrā (i.e. the eternal deep sleep state of consciousness where there is complete bliss; here meaning, you ever remain blissful and oblivious of the turmoil around you in this world. This Mahā Nidrā is also used by Lord Viṣṇu while he reclines on the bed made by the legendary Śeṣanātha on the celestial ocean of milk known as Kṣīra Sāgara—see also verse no. 45 and 108). The virtues of valour, strength, energy, power, potent, vitality and valiance present in a creature have their origin in you (i.e. all these positive attributes in a creature are because of you and you are the one who inspires and ignites these virtues in him). You are the supreme Goddess of Truth and Truthfulness (127).

दीर्घा ककुद्यमिनी विद्या शान्तिदा शान्तिवर्द्धिनी।
लक्ष्म्यादिशक्तिजननी शक्तिचक्रप्रवर्तिका ।।128।।
dīrghā kakudyaminī vidyā śāntidā śāntivarddhinī /
lakṣamyādiśaktijananī śakticakrapravartikā //

You have virtues and glories which have a broad, large and wide scope and reach; you are a towering figure, most prominent and outstanding amongst your peers; you have a proclaimed and long lasting influence. You are honoured and respected by the epithet Kakudyaminī[1]. You are a personification of knowledge, expertise, skills, erudition and scholarship, collectively known as Vidyā. You are one who gives peace, tranquility, serenity and placidity to the creature and enhance these virtues in him. You are the one who produces or creates strengths and powers that come with wealth, prosperity and worldly riches, i.e. you are Goddess Lakṣmī[2] personified (because she is the patron Goddess of worldly assets). You are the one who activates the various 'Śakti Cakras'[3] or the subtle energy centers present inside the body (and defined by the Upaniṣads dealing with Yoga) (128).

[Note :—[1]The word 'Kakudyaminī' is formed from the seed word 'Kukubha' which means that you are at the pinnacle, at the zenith of your glories and fame, you are charming, adorable and auspicious, you are the best of scriptures and their tenets and the knowledge incorporated in them personified, you are one of the daughters of Prajāpati Dakṣa who is the divine wife of Dharma, the patron God of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, virtuousness and nobility of thought and action, or these virtues personified, you are like the flowers of the tree called Campā (or *Michelia Chmpaca* which has yellow, fragrant flowers which are used as metaphor for beauty and tenderness); you wear a necklace of these flowers (i.e. you are beautiful and attractive to look at); you are like the tree called Arjuna (or *Terminalia Alatagbra*), and you are the one who gives direction to the creatures of the world (i.e. you are the moral preceptor and guide of the world).

[2] You can empower a man with all the benefits that accrue to him with the acquisition of wealth and riches by setting into motion the 'cycle' of one benefit after another, one glory after another, one virtue followed by another, so that the person reaches the zenith of successes and accomplishments.

[3] The word 'Cakra' refers to the subtle energy centers present inside the body. According to Yoga texts, when the vital energy trapped in these Cakras are activated, a person acquires immense potentials, including spiritual and mystical powers. In brief, the Cakras and their location and shape are the following—(i) 'Bhaga' or 'Brahma Cakra' is triangular in shape and represents the female genital organ; (ii) The 'Mūla Kanda' (literally the edible root, tuber root, e.g. radish) is present near the anus, has the shape of a lotus with 4-petals. It is also called 'Kāma' because it is the seat of passion and lust; (iii) The 'Mūlādhāra Cakra' is located between genitals and anus; (iv) The 'Svādhiṣṭhāna Cakra' is located in the groins of males and the Bhaga area of females. It has a 5-headed male phallus like a sprouting seed and its counterpart in the female is the clitoris; The Cakras 1-4 are related to the sexual reproduction cycle marking the creation of the world. Hence are called 'Kāma' (lust, passion, desire), and are associated with the fire element; (v) The 'Kuṇḍalinī' is located between the navel and Svādhiṣṭhāna Cakra in the upper part of the Mūlakanda, and it is coil shaped having 8 loops. Its one end blocks the entrance to the Suṣumnā nerve (Nāḍī) rising from the base of the spine and going right up to the head. Therefore, we conclude that Kuṇḍalinī lies dormant at the base of the spine; (vi) The 'Maṇipūra Cakra' is located in the navel area, is shaped like a gem and is surrounded by the network of Nāḍīs (nerves) called solar plexus. It is also the site of the Sun energy; (vii) The 'Anāhata Cakra' is located in the chest between the heart and lung area and it is shaped like a swan looking downwards. It is also assumed to be like a 8-petal lotus facing down; (viii) The 'Viśuddha Cakra/Kaṇṭha Cakra' is located in the throat. To the left of it passes the Iḍā nerve representing the moon, to its right goes the Piṅglā nerve representing the sun, and in the center is the Suṣumnā nerve through

fivewhich the Kuṇḍalinī energy rises up from the base of the spine to the skull; (ix) The 'Tālu Cakra' also called Rājadanta. It is the route to the 10th door of Brahma. It is located in the palate (back of the mouth); (x) The 'Ājñā Carka or Bhrū Cakra' is located between the eyebrows and root of the nose. It is also called the third eye of enlightenment and wisdom; (xi) The 'Brahma Rahandra Cakra or Sahasrāra Carka' is located in the forehead and has the form of a grey cloud or smoke. 'Brahma Randhra' has two connotations—(a) it means 'an opening of fistula', (b) the hair-like spilt in the top of the skull from where the vital wind called 'Prāṇa' makes its exit from the body of a Yogī (ascetic) at the time of his death. For the purpose of Vedānta, the latter is regarded as the 'Brahma Randhra' while for practices of meditation in the initial stages when the 'Apāna Vāyu' is required to be diverted from the lower intestine into the 'Kuṇḍalinī', the former definition of 'Brahma Randhra' is referred to; (xii) The 'Vyoma Cakra' is symbolic of the sky and it is shaped like a 10-petal lotus located at the top of the head.]

त्रिशक्तिजननी (830) जन्या षडूर्मिपरिवर्जिता।
स्वाहा च कर्मकरणी युगान्तदलनात्मिका।। 129।।
triśaktijananī (830) janyā ṣaḍūrmiparivarjitā /
svāhā ca karmakaraṇī yugāntadalanātmikā //

[830] You are the mother (creator) of the 'Triad of Śaktis'[1]. [See verse nos. 120 also.] You are the one who gives birth (rise) to everything (because you are the divine mother of cosmic creation). The so-called 6 Urmis[2] do not effect you at all (or, you are free from their denigrating and demeaning effects and influences). You are Svāhā (the consort of the great Fire-God or you are the Fire-God personified, possessing all the remarkable strengths, powers and characteristics of fire). You are the vital energy and strength that enables one to do anything (because you are 'Śakti' or energy and vitality). You are the one who annihilates or concludes everything that exists at the time of the end of the creation (literally, at the end of a Yuga or an era which marks the conclusion of one celestial cycle of creation and destruction; the time when the old order passeth and the new one takes over) (129).

[Note :—[1]The triad of powers and strengths called the Triśaktis that a man possesses are the following—(a) the power to wish and have determination, called Icchā-Śakti, because it is only when one wishes to do anything and has the determination to do so that he actually does anything at all and strives hard to get success in it; (b) the power, strength and empowerment obtained as a result of acquisition of knowledge, wisdom, erudition, enlightenment, sagacity, scholarship and expertise. This is called Jñāna Śakti, simply because merely wish and determination wouldn't suffice if a person does not have the required knowledge and skill, the expertise and wisdom to accomplish his objectives successfully, and (c) the actual ability to carryout his plans to their successful completion, i.e. to do deeds, to take actions and enter into enterprise, because simply sitting and procrastinating endlessly wouldn't give success unless there is assiduous activity and diligent effort, no matter how wise a man is and how determined he might be. Besides these three, the following are also called Triśakti or the potential powers present in a man—(a) to have influence, impact, affect and sway upon others, (b) to have enthusiasm, zeal, flourish, drive and courage, and (c) to have a good advise in this world as well as the support of divine intercession or intervention of Gods who should be benign and favorably inclined towards him. Further, the three Goddesses—Kālī (the black complexioned goddess of war), Tārā (see verse no. 123), and Tripura also known as Tripura Sundarī, are also called the Triśaktis, or the divine cosmic energy which has revealed itself in the form of these three divine Goddesses. These Goddesses are the various manifestation of Pārvatī, the divine consort of Lord Śiva. Pārvatī is usually referred to by one single epithet—Śakti—which literally means energy, vitality, strength and powers.

[2]The six Urmis are the following—(a) the horrors of birth, (b) the problems of existence, (c) the confusions, restlessness, agitations, bewilderments and various perplexities caused by doubts and opposing thoughts which tear a person apart, (d) the problems of development, (e) decay and (f) destruction and ruin. The word Urmi means—faults, flaws, blemishes, taints, drawbacks and shortcomings in a person's characters and temperaments that are associated with his existence in this mortal world.]

संकर्षणा जगद्धात्री कामयोनिः किरीटिनी।
ऐन्द्री (840) त्रैलोक्यनमिता वैष्णवी परमेश्वरी।। 130।।
saṃkarṣaṇā jagaddhātrī kāmayoniḥ kirīṭinī /
aindrī (840) trailokyanamitā vaiṣṇavī parameśvarī //

You charm and attract everyone. You are the mother of the world. You represent the female genital organs which ignites passions (which is necessary if the cycle of creation its to continue revolving eternally). You wear a crown and a tiara (you are like a symbolic crown of the whole creation; it is metaphor to describe your stupendous glories and magnificence, your remarkable fame and virtues that make you the glory of the world). [840] You are the strength of the various organs that enables a man to perceive and act[1]. You are revered and honour, adored and worshipped by all the three worlds (i.e. the nether world, the mortal or terrestrial world, and the immortal world or the heavens). You are known as Vaiṣṇavī (Lord Viṣṇu's devoted consort, Lakṣmī, who acts as per his wishes; or you are the Śakti of Viṣṇu personified).You are the supreme Goddess called Parameśvarī (even as the supreme God is called Parameśvara) (130).

[Note :—[1]There are 5 organs of perception—eyes which see, ears which hear, nose which smells and breathes, tongue which tastes and speaks, and skin which feels and encloses the body from the outside like a sac cloth. The 5 organs of action are the hands, the legs, the mouth, the anus and the genitals organs, which pertain to the 5 activities of doing anything, moving, eating and speaking, excretion and reproduction respectively.]

प्रद्युम्नदयिता दान्ता युग्मदृष्टिस्त्रिलोचना।
महोत्कटाः हंसगतिः प्रचण्डा (850) चण्डविक्रमा।। 131।।
pradyumnadayitā dāntā yugmadṛṣṭistrilocanā /
mahotkaṭāḥ haṃsagatiḥ pracaṇḍā (850) caṇḍavikramā //

You are the one who empowers a man with passions and desires to procreate. [The word 'Pradyumna' refers to the patron God of love, called Kāmadeva cupid, hence the interpretation.] You are magnanimous, gracious, generous and benevolent (when it comes to giving away largesse in the form of mercy and blessings). You represent the dual view of the world (as a Puruṣa, the cosmic Male, as well as Śakti, the cosmic Female). You are said to possess three eyes (viz. two ordinary eyes and the third subtle eye of wisdom located at the tri-junction of the eyebrows and the root of the nose); hence one of your names is Trilocana. [See also verse no. 111, word no. 1 in this context.] You possess the virtues of having great eagerness, keenness and intensity as well as being earnest, keen and fervent in whatsoever you pursue or desire to have. Your gait and demeanours are as majestic, elegant and graceful as that of the bird Swan. [850] You are reputed to be fierce, furious, uncompromising, unrelenting, vigorous and energetic in whatever you do. Your potentials, valour, punch, strength, courage, might, prowess and heroism are very effective and sharp, incisive and severe like the fierce Caṇḍī, the great Goddess representing wrath, anger, revenge, retribution and vehemence (131).

वृषावेशा वियन्मात्रा विन्ध्यपर्वतवासिनी। हिमवन्मेरुनिलया कैलासगिरिवासिनी।।132।।
vṛṣāveśā viyanmātrā vindhyaparvatavāsinī /
himavanmerunilayā kailāsagirivāsinī //

You are the energy, the potent, the prowess, the vitality and the strength inherently present in a bull. Your dimensions are like that of sky (i.e. you are measureless, fathomless, endless, without any boundary, are eternal and infinite). You have your divine abode in the holy Vindhyācala Mountains (and worshipped there as Goddess Vindyavāsinī). You also have your divine and auspicious dwelling in the Himālayas (in the mythological household of Himavāna, the legendary king of the snow capped mountain range, as his daughter named Girijā, literally 'the one who is born of Giri' or a mountain—see also verse no. 43 and 115) as well as in Mt. Meru (where according to Purāṇas, the Gods resides; the word also means 'gold'). Besides these, Mt. Kailāśa (the abode of Lord Śiva, present on the northern banks of lake Mānasasarovara and located in Tibet) is also one of your mythical divine abodes (because you are Śiva's consort) (132).

चाणूरहन्त्री तनया नीतिज्ञा कामरूपिणी (860)।
वेदविद्या व्रतरता धर्मशीलाऽनिलाशना।।133।।
cāṇūrahantrī tanayā nītijñā kāmarūpiṇī (860)/
vedavidyā vratаratā dharmaśīlā'nilāśanā //

You are the slayer of demon named Cāṇūra. You are known as Tanayā (literally meaning a young daughter—see verse no. 28 also). You are well-versed and expert in Nīti (ethics, morality, code of conduct and behaviour, the tenets or principles as laid down in the scriptures). [860] You are a personification of Kāma (representing passion, lust, desire as well as deeds and activities pertaining to this world—see also verse no. 130). You are very steadfast, diligent, persistent and persevering in following the righteous path shown by the Vedas, as well as are engrossed in studying, understanding, contemplating upon and implementing that knowledge and wisdom (for the welfare of the creation—see also verse nos. 89 and 90). You follow the path of Dharma which is righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, virtuousness and nobility personified. [See also verse nos. 148-150.] Wind or air is your staple diet (because wind is the vital life giving force in creation and it sustains life in a creature.

In other words, you are 'life and vitality' personified; you embody wind or air which is the life giving vital force of creation (133).

[Note :—The fourth word 'Kāma' also means that you are very beautiful and charming because Kāmadeva—cupid, the patron God of Kāma which is a word representing lust, passion and desire, is considered to be the most beautiful being in creation. Kāma is usually used has a metaphor for beauty, passion and desires.]

अयोध्यानिलया वीरा महाकालसमुद्भवा। विद्याधरक्रिया सिद्धा विद्याधरनिराकृतिः।।134।।

ayodhyānilayā vīrā mahākālasamudbhavā /
vidyādharakriyā siddhā vidyādharanirākṛtiḥ //

You are a resident of Ayodhyā (as Sītā). You are brave, valiant, strong, courageous, heroic, bold, daring, mighty and eminent. You are the creator of Mahā Kāla (the great God of death). You act most wisely and sagaciously, because you are adroit and enlightened like those who are known as Vidyādharas (i.e. those who are experts in any filed of knowledge). You have mystical powers, are accomplished, successful and fulfilled. You are formless, attributeless and subtle like the Vidyādharas (134).

[Note :—The Vidyādharas are a type of semi-God who are midway in heavenly hierarchy, standing between the Gods on the one hand and the other junior Gods such as the Gandharvas, the celestial musicians, and the Kinnaras, the celestial singers and dancers on the other. Vidyādharas are those spirits which are wise and enlightened amongst their peers who are on the threshold of becoming Gods, but they could not do so because they had some shortcomings which prevented them from acquiring the highest stature of becoming a God. So they are regarded as senior in the hierarchy of heavenly system of Gods.]

आप्यायन्ती (870) वहन्ती च पावनी पोषणी खिला।
मातृका मन्मथोद्भूता वारिजा वाहनप्रिया।। 135।।

āpyāyantī (870) vahantī ca pāvanī poṣaṇī khilā /
mātṛkā manmathodbhūtā vārijā vāhanapriyā //

[870] You are a provider of a contentedness and satisfaction. You are tolerant and bear everything with fortitude, patience, equanimity and courage. You are auspicious, pure, pristine, sacred and holy. You are the sustainer, the nourisher and the care taker of all. You are like the roasted rice grain which is a light and staple food for the poor masses. [Rice grain is a metaphor for the Goddess' virtue of providing

sustenance and basic nourishment to her subjects, because rice is one the staple foods of India.] You are the holy and divine mother from whom Kāmadeva—cupid has been born. You are produced or you have appeared from the water element (a reference to Goddess Lakṣmī who was deemed to have been born from the churning of the ocean by the Gods and the demons using Mt. Mandrācala as the churning rod and Śeṣanātha, the legendry python, as the rope during the mythical efforts made by the Gods and the demons to get Amṛta, the legendary ambrosia of eternity and bliss). You love to ride (instead of walking on foot) (135).

करीषिणी स्वधा वाणी (880) वीणावादनतत्परा।
सेविता सेविका सेवा सिनीवाली गरुत्मती।। 136।।
karīṣiṇī svadhā vāṇī (880) vīṇāvādanatatparā /
sevitā sevikā sevā sinīvālī garutmatī //

You are like Karīṣiṇī (the dried dung found in forests and which is used by forest dwellers as fuel for their fire). [That is, you are the Goddess that energises the fire of the hearth and lends your potential powers to produce heat and energy in it. This fire is very necessary to cook food. So indirectly you help a man to prepare food for his sustenance. You are the basic ingredient of the fire element, i.e. you are its energy, heat, vitality and light; there will be no energy, no vitality, no heat and no light in this creation if you were not innately and subtly present in the fire element.] You are Svadhā (literally, the food offered to the dead ancestors or Gods to sustain them; the word also refers to one of the daughters of Prajāpati Dakṣa). [That is, you sustain not only the Gods but also the dead ancestors of the human race. Similarly, you are a manifestation of the divine daughter of Dakṣa who is revered by all.] [880] You are a personification of the faculty of speech (i.e. you are the vital force that enables a person to speak properly and acquire fame and renown because of his ability to speak with erudition, coherence, articulation and wisdom; you enable and empower a person to speak because, as the fire and wind elements, you are the patron Goddess of speech represented by the Fire-God, the vital wind called Prāṇa or breath, as well as Goddess Sarasvatī, who is the patron Goddess of speech and learning). You are eager and keen to play the Indian lute (because Goddess Sarasvatī, of whom you are a manifestation, is also very fond of playing it). You are being served by all the creatures, and at the same time you serve all (as their divine and holy mother). In fact, you are an embodiment of service and dedication; you exemplify exemplary and dedicated virtue of service. You are Sinīvālī (a Vedic period Goddess; a metaphor for the moon on the first day of its bright fortnight). You are serious, somber and grave; you have profound wisdom and intelligence (136).

अरुन्धती हिरण्याक्षी मणिदा श्रीवसुप्रदा (890)।
वसुमती वसोर्धारा वसुन्धरा समुद्भवा।। 137।।
arundhatī hiraṇyākṣī maṇidā śrīvasupradā (890)/
vasumatī vasordhārā vasundharā samudbhavā //

You are like Arundhatī (the revered and holy wife of sage Vasiṣṭha who was the son of the creator Brahmā and the moral preceptor and the royal priest of the clan in which Śrī Rāma was born, i.e. the Goddess is as honorable and revered as Arundhati). You are known as Hiraṇyākṣī[1]. You liberally bestow wealth and worldly riches symbolised by giving away liberal quantities of Maṇi (precious gems) as largesse to your devotees and followers. [890] You give the boon of, or you bless and bestow 'Śrī' and 'Vasu' to all who are your devotees and are righteous and virtuous[2]. You are known as Vasumatī (literally meaning equivalent to, similar to, synonymous with and the one who possess the different Vasus), Vasordhārā (literally meaning one where the various Vasus flow continuously in an uninterrupted stream or in a continuous supply), and Vasundharā (literally meaning the earth where all the Vasus are kept; a vessel, a container, a habitat, a dwelling place, a foundation, a storage place, a treasury for all the different Vasus). It is from you that all the different Vasus have emerged or have been produced or created[3] (137).

[Note :—[1]The word 'Hiraṇyākṣī' has many connotations. It refers to the Goddess whose eyes are literally 'golden', but it is a metaphor for her being benevolent, merciful and benign; her eyes are a treasury of Amṛta which is the ambrosia of bliss and eternity as well as peace and happiness. The word means one who provides material well being represented by the precious metal gold and happiness that accrues with worldly comforts. At the same time, she is the Goddess who had slayed the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu in her manifestation as Goddess Durgā; hence her eyes are most fierce and stern, symbolising her valour, potent, vitality, strength and courage. The word also refers to greenery; hence the Goddess is a symbol of fertility and worldly prosperity. Her eyes shower benevolence and fertility as ambrosia dripping upon her devotees through her eyes. They represent the kind and merciful eyes of a loving, caring and doting mother who loves her children; by looking at her merciful eyes, the creature feel very comfortable, reassured and happy.

[2] The words 'Śrī' and 'Vasu' go hand in hand. 'Śrī' means worldly prosperity, wealth, opulence, majesty, grandeur, riches, successes, accomplishments, honours, respect, fame, renown and splendour etc. The word 'Vasu' refers to the God who has 8 subordinates under him who are the patron Gods of fire, water, wealth, gold and gems. The word also refers to Śiva, Viṣṇu, the Sun and its rays as well as saintly and pious people. In short, all the good, righteous and virtuous things in creation with their respective patron Gods are included in this word. Hence, the Goddess represents all those virtues covered by the words 'Śrī' and 'Vasu', and she has the power to bless one with them or empower her devotees to acquire these assets and virtues.

[3] The words Vasumatī, Vasodharā and Vasundharā refer to Mother Earth because the earth possess all wealth represented by the different 'Vasus'; she gives them liberally and magnanimously to all the creatures dependent upon her, without complaining in any way; she possesses the different Vasus in abundance; she is the huge, an almost inexhaustible receptacle or a treasury of them; they continuously flow in her bowels and come out in an uninterrupted supply to benefit all the creatures; and it is in her that the Vasus have not only found their habitats by also owe their emergence and existence itself to her (Mother Earth). That is why also the Goddess is treated as being synonymous with and an image of as well as a manifestation of Mother Earth.]

वरारोहा वरार्हा च वपुःसंगसमुद्भवा।
श्रीफली श्रीमती श्रीशा श्रीनिवासा (900) हरिप्रिया।। 138।।
varārohā varārhā ca vapuḥsaṃgasamudbhavā /
śrīphalī śrīmatī śrīśā śrīnivāsā (900) haripriyā //

You have an auspicious, pleasing, charming, benevolent and pleasant face. You posses the best of virtues, attributes, characteristics and qualities. You have been produced as a conjugal relationship or union of two bodies (i.e. you represent that vital force or Śakti that was produced as a union of the Virāṭ Puruṣa and Mother Nature). You are honoured with the title of Śrīfalī[1]. You are also known as Śrīmatī (an honorable lady), Śrīṣā[2], [900] Śrīnivasa[3], and Hari Priyā (one who is very dear to Hari or Lord Viṣṇu; hence the word also refers to Goddess Lakṣmī) (138).

[Note :—[1]The word Śrīfalī means—(i) a coconut, (ii) Indian goose berry or *Phyllanthus Embelica*, (iii) Indian Jujube or *Zizyphus Jujuba*—all these are considered auspicious fruits in Indian mythology, i.e. the Goddess is as auspicious as these fruits called Śrīfalī.

[2]The word Śrīṣā refers to the divine female aspect of Lord Viṣṇu, known as Śrīśā or the supreme and most exalted one, a sovereign. Here, the word is a reference to Goddess Lakṣmī who is like the crown jewel of creation because she represents wealth and prosperity without which ordinary life would be difficult to sustain.

[3]The word Śrīnivāsa has two connotations—(i) the honorable and revered abode where 'Śrī', which literally means glory and majesty, pomp and pageantry, wealth and prosperity, magnificence and grandeur etc. have their abodes, or one who is a treasury of these virtues; (ii) the abode where Lord Viṣṇu resides; here meaning the heart of Goddess Lakṣmī which is the abode of Viṣṇu.]

श्रीधरी श्रीकरी कम्पा श्रीधरा ईशवीरणी। अनन्तदृष्टिरक्षुद्रा धात्रीशा धनदप्रिया (910)।।139।।

śrīdharī śrīkarī kampā śrīdharā īśavīraṇī/
anantadṛṣṭirakṣudrā dhātrīśā dhanadapriyā (910)//

You are the female aspect of Viṣṇu, the sustainer and nourisher of the creation; you are the incarnation of his divine consort Lakṣmī who represents wealth which is very necessary for sustenance of life in this world. You are the one who provides auspicious and welfare, and mark the beginning of any enterprise or endeavour. [In other words, you are that spark that initiates all initiatives, all activities, all deeds and actions, all enterprises and endeavours. You give success and accomplishment in all efforts; you bestow majesty, grandeur, significance and fame; you are the one who gives opulence, prosperity, riches and wealth.] You are known as Kampā[1]. You bear or possess all the virtues associated with the word 'Śrī' (see verse no. 137 and 138—such as opulence, wealth, prosperity, pomp, majesty, grandeur, magnificence, fame, splendour, glory, fortune, honour, respect etc.). You are the great Goddess who is most strong, brave, courageous, valiant, potent and powerful. You have an infinitely deep and penetrating insight into everything; nothing is concealed from you. You are the protector of even the humblest, the most downtrodden underdogs. You are the mother, protector, sustainer, well wisher and nourisher of all. [910] You are the dear consort of the Lord of wealth (here meaning Lord Viṣṇu's divine consort Lakṣmī as well as the consort of Kubera who is the God's tressurer) (139).

[Note :—[1]The third word Kampā literally means a bird catcher's snare. By using this word while talking about Śrī, the implied meaning is that worldly opulence, wealth, prosperity, fame, grandeur and honour are like traps for a creature and they prevent his emancipation and salvation, his liberation and deliverance from this mundane world even as a bird catcher uses the snare called Kampā to trap fowl.]

निहन्त्री दैत्यसिंहानां सिंहिका सिंहवाहिनी। सुसेना चन्द्रनिलया सुकीर्तिश्छिन्नसंशया।।140।।
nihantrī daityasiṃhānāṃ siṃhikā siṃhavāhinī /
susenā candranilayā sukīrtiśchinnasaṃśayā //

You are the slayer and eliminator of great, fierce and ferocious demons who are comparable to lions amongst animals. You are like a lioness yourself (i.e. you are ferocious, fierce, fearless, potent, powerful, energetic, majestic, strong, grand, awe inspiring and the Lord and mistress of the entire creation even as a lioness is the ruling queen of the animal kingdom). You ride a lion (in your manifestation as Goddess Durgā). You have a beautiful (strong, invincible, disciplined, powerful, potent and well armed) army. Your divine abode is in the moon (which is metaphor for beauty, peace, love and enchantment; it is a treasury of Amṛta which is the ambrosia for eternity and bliss; it is an ornament of Lord Śiva because a crescent moon is tucked in a matted lock of hairs on his head). You have a majestic glory and magnificent form. You have no doubts, consternations, confusions, perplexities, confoundedness and bewilderments of any kind in you (i.e. you are free from these negative traits), and there is no doubt about it (140).

बलज्ञा बलदा वामा (920) लेलिहानाऽमृताश्रवा।
नित्योदिता स्वयंज्योतिरुत्सुकामृतजीविनी।। 141 ।।
balajñā baladā vāmā (920) lelihānā'mṛtāśravā /
nityoditā svayaṃjyotirutsukāmṛtajīvinī //

You know the importance, significance and meaning of the virtues of courage, valour, strength, power and potentials. At the same time, you are the one who bestows these virtues on your devotees as well as the ones whom you are pleased with, such as those people who are righteous and virtuous. In other words, these virtues can be acquired by your grace. [920] You are known as Vāmā (because you are aggressive, have an unconventional form and an angry and wrathful countenance and demeanours, you are viciously opposed to others in the battlefield, such as your enemies or those who are evil, pervert and sinful by showing them your formidably cruel and ferocious form which is not usual for a divine Goddess and a loving mother, but you have assumed this unconventional form in order to help your devotees and good creatures in this world by getting rid of the evil ones). As Mahākālī, the great ferocious patron Goddess of war and destruction, you have a lapping tongue (which is soaked in blood and protruding out from your open, horrifying mouth). [That is why the adjective Vāmā in serial no. 2 of this verse has been used to describe the Goddess.] But while you are thirsty for blood of your enemies who are evil ones and represented by the demons, for your devotees and those who are noble, good, virtuous and righteous, your tongue drips of Amṛta (the ambrosia of peace and bliss). You are immortal, eternal and everlasting. You are self illuminated. You are ever eager for the welfare of others. You are the one who can infuse a new breath of life in those who are already dead; you represent the elixir of eternity called Amṛta which makes even the Gods immortal. That is, you personify Amṛta (141).

वज्रदंष्ट्रा वज्रजिह्वा वैदेही वज्रविग्रहा (930)।
मंगल्या मंगला माला मलिना मलहारिणी।। 142।।
vajradaṃṣṭrā vajrajihvā vaidehī vajravigrahā (930)/
maṃgalyā maṃgalā mālā malinā malahāriṇī//

Your teeth and jaws are strong like the Vajra (which is a weapon of Indra and is made of the strongest, hardest, most sturdy, powerful and potent material in existence such as the diamond, and as such it is considered invincible). Similarly, your tongue is also as powerful, potent and effective as Bajra. You are also known as Vaidehī (literally the daughter of king Videha, or king Janaka; that is, you are Sītā in the form of Mahākālī). [930] Your body, your form is also as strong, powerful and robust as Bajra. You are an abode of auspiciousness and goodness. You are auspicious and noble, holy and divine. You are like the holy rosary or a magnificent garland called Mālā[1]. You are dark complexioned and apparently very unconventional, uncouth and unholy to look at (because of your present war-scarred, blood soaked, naked, ferociously fierce, vehemently wrathful, vengeful, scowling and awful form in the battlefield). But it must be remembered that you are, at the same time, the one who eliminates these negative traits called the various Malas (flaws, faults, shortcomings, taints, blemishes, scars and all sorts of negative characteristics present in a creature leading to sinfulness, perversions, evil and unrighteousness) (142).

[Note :—[1]The seventh word Mālā literally means a rosary, a garland or a necklace. In different contexts, it acquires different meanings—(i) you have a chain of virtues in you like the beads of a rosary or garland, (ii) You, as Mahākālī, are bearing a most unholy garland around your neck because you are wearing skulls and severed heads of demons threaded together in their intestines, (iii) you, as the divine Goddess, are an auspicious provider of auspiciousness, and you are wearing an auspicious garland, because you are the great Goddess of creation, (iv) though you are auspicious yourself, the garland of skulls and severed heads that you wear is inauspicious.]

गान्धर्वी गारुडी चान्द्री कम्बलाश्वतरप्रिया।
सौदामिनी (940) जनानन्दा भ्रुकुटीकुटिलानना।। 143।।
gāndharvī gāruḍī cāndrī kambalāśvatarapriyā /
saudāminī (940) janānandā bhrukuṭīkuṭilānanā //

You are a personification or symbolic of a female Gandharva (who are semi-Gods and celestial musicians). You ride upon a Garuḍa (the legendary eagle or heron who is the mount of Lord Viṣṇu). You are a personification of the beautiful moonlight; the glory, brightness, charm and beauty of the Moon personified. You are known as Kambalā (a synonym for Lakṣmī or Kamalā, the Goddess of wealth who sits on a lotus flower and holds one in her hands; she is the divine consort of Viṣṇu). You are the beloved of Aśvatara (the king of serpents, literally 'the seahorse'; you are type of Gandharva, the semi-God who has the face like that of a horse). [940] You are like Saudāminī (literally meaning electric or lightening having auspicious and beneficial energy). You give happiness and joys to your subjects (i.e. the creatures of the world). Your eyebrows are so crooked and curved that they give your face a cruel and fearfully scowling appearance; it appears evil and wicked, inspiring awe and fears in the heart of those who look at you, especially your enemies who are evil and sinful ones (143).

कर्णिकारका कक्षा कंसप्राणापहारिणी। युगन्धरा युगावर्त्ता त्रिसन्ध्याहर्षवर्धिणी।।144।।
karṇikārakā kakṣā kaṃsaprāṇāpahāriṇī /
yugandharā yugāvarttā trisandhyāharṣavardhiṇī //

Your hands (palms) are broad like the leaves of the plant known as Karṇikāra (or Kanaka Campā—*Pterospermum Acerifolium*; the leaves of this plant are very wide at the end of a thin stem, representing the hands of the Goddess). You are known as Kakṣa (i.e. you are the outer perimeter or the circumference of the entire wheel of creation; you envelop and enclose everything; nothing exists beyond you; nothing can transgress your authority and dictate). You are that divine Goddess who had brought to an end the life of Kaṃsa (who was killed by Lord Kṛṣṇa. That is, you are that vital, potent and subtle energy, the divine force and the hidden potentials that had enabled Kṛṣṇa to subdue and kill the monster-like uncle of his, named Kaṃsa, who was much stronger than him in physical strength and prowess). You are known as Yugandharā as well as Yugāvartā because you bring to an end a particular era or a long period of time in the cycle of creation, and at the same time you make the four Yugas—Sat, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali Yugas—turn around in a cycle rotating endlessly, one Yuga following another, and make all the Yugas recur endlessly. You represent the so-called 'Sandhyā points' (the three times of a day when two periods of time meet each other—the 'dawn' when the night time meets the daytime, the 'noon' when the forenoon hours meets the afternoon hours, and 'dusk' or twilight when the daytime meets the night time; it also refers to the 3 sacramental prayers called 'Sandhyā' offered at these point of time during the course of the day—see also verse no. 117). You are an enhancer of thrill, cheerfulness, happiness and exhilaration in the heart of devotees (144).

> [Note :—The fourth, fifth and sixth words, when read together, means—'You are that vital and supreme authority, force, power and energy that brings an end to a particular phase in life, be it a civilisation, be it the different phases in the life of an individual, be it the cycle of good and bad, sorrows and miseries as well as happiness and joy, be it construction and destruction etc. Meanwhile, you also ensure that the wheel of creation continues to rotate smoothly, without hindrance and faltering in the least —you keep the wheel of time turning ceaselessly. The analogue of the Sun can be used here to explain this concept—you create the dawn which is the end of the dark night and the beginning of new day; you create the noon which marks the junction point of the rising and setting phases of the sun's journey across the sky, because it is at its zenith at the central point of the hemisphere of the sky; you create the dusk which marks the meeting point of the day and the night. You are the force that joined them seamlessly and ensure that the transition from one phase to another is smooth.
>
> In other words, you are that divine mother who can bestow, as your grace,

the boon of peaceful transition of a creature from this world to another; you can ensure his liberation and deliverance without much effort and see to it that he gets emancipation and ultimate salvation. This transition will be very smooth as the movement of the sun across the sky is also very smooth and unaffected by all other natural phenomenons occurring in this world. This is a way of saying that none of the problems associated with this world will come in the way of liberation and deliverance of your devotees or on those upon whom you are kind and benevolent.]

प्रत्यक्षदेवता (950) दिव्या दिव्यगन्धा दिवापरा।
शक्रासनगता शाक्री साध्वी नारी शवासना।। 145।।
pratyakṣadevatā (950) divyā divyagandhā divāparā /
śakrāsanagatā śākrī sādhvī nārī śavāsanā //

[950] You are the divine Godhead that is there to be clearly seen, witnessed, experienced; it is obvious, evident, tangible and cognisable. You are holy, divine, glorious, grandiose, magnificent and majestic. A pleasant and sweet aroma pervades everywhere where you are present. That is, you give out a sweet and pleasant fragrance symbolising your holiness, divinity, purity, auspiciousness and blissful state of existence which makes those who are near you witness and experience these virtues themselves. You are the glorious and supreme Goddess known as Divyā (meaning the Day; Goddess Umā or Pārvatī or Gaurī). You symbolically sit upon the throne or seat of Indra (the king of Gods). [That is, you exercise the same authority which Indra has over the Gods and the rest of the creation as the King. In fact, you have authorised Indra to be a King and carry out his duties as the king of Gods. But the supreme authority who has delegated its powers to Indra is you.] In fact, you are the very empowerment of Indra; you are the vital strength, powers, prowess, authority, sway, the stupendous majesty and glory that he possesses; you embody these virtues in you. [That is, you are not only the supreme delegating authority for the powers and strengths that Indra possesses, but you also are those powers and strengths themselves. It is you who subtly, imperceptibly, intangibly and in a behind-the-curtain manner enables Indra to carry out his designated duties as the king of Gods and creation). You are holy, pious, uncorrupt, immaculate and a 'Divine Lady' or the female aspect of creation. You sit atop a dead body[1] (145).

[Note :—[1]The last word Śavāsana has two parts—'Śava' meaning a corpse, and 'Āsana' meaning to sit. This word refers to the Mahākālī form of the

Goddess as she appears in the battlefield of Puṣkara after killing the thousand-headed Rāvaṇa. The previous Canto has described the horrifying scene of the battlefield, littered with dead corpses and the Goddess, along with her companions, playing around with the skulls of dead demons as if they were balls, kicking their bodies, ripping out their intestines, making a garland out of them and drinking their blood. While running around madly in anger here and there, she would naturally step on cadavers scattered on the battlefield. When she wished to rest, she would sit on one of the dead bodies. A proof that she did so comes in Canto 13, verse no. 69-70 wherein it is said that when the earth began to sink underneath the formidable pressure of the foot of Mahākālī, Lord Śiva assumed the form of a dead body and lay on the ground, sandwiched between the foot of the Goddess and the earth, so as to cushion the pounding of the earth by the ferocious thumping of it by the Goddess. In Tantra Yoga, the Goddess is depicted as doing meditation while sitting on a dead corpse in the cremation ground; hence the reference to her sitting on a dead body in the last word—see also verse no. 27 in this context.]

इष्टा विशिष्टा (960) शिष्टेष्टा शिष्टाशिष्टप्रपूजिता।
शतरूपा शतावर्त्ता विनीता सुरभिःसुरा।। 146।।
iṣṭā viśiṣṭā (960) śiṣṭeṣṭā śiṣṭāśiṣṭaprapūjitā /
śatarūpā śatāvarttā vinītā surabhiḥsurā //

You are the chosen Goddess or deity called Iṣṭā. [960] You are especial, exceptional, distinguished, outstanding, sublime, prominent and equisite. You are an ideal, the chosen deity and the honourable Lord God or Goddess (called Iṣṭā) of those who are noble, virtuous, righteous, cultured, gentle, courteous and civilised, and therefore regarded as senior amongst other Gods and Goddesses (Śiṣṭā). You are adored, worshipped, honoured and revered by both the civilised, noble, cultured, gentle, sober and courteous people who are honourable and pleasant in their demeanours as well as by those who are the opposite of them, i.e. those who are wicked, evil, lowly, mean, ignoble, uncivilised, uncultured, rough, haughty, uncourteous, dishonorable and insinuating in their behaviour, manners, conducts, thoughts and demeanours. You have hundreds or countless forms. You are like a Pestle (Śatāvarttā)[1]. You are courteous, polite, kind and gracious. You are also known as Surabhi[2]. [See also verse no. 91.] You are an embodiment of the divine ambrosia called Surā (literally an intoxicating and exhilarating drink, but not one that makes a man wild and reckless and which is denigrating and demeaning for his spiritual upliftment; but the elixir here is the Amṛta which provides eternal bliss, peace and happiness to its drinkers) (146).

[Note :—[1] The word Śatāvarttā means a pestle. That is, you are the force which crushes and pounds and thereby reduces to power those forces of nature that are harmful and inimical for the creation. Another interpretation is this—you are that force that makes available life protecting and sustaining elements in the world for the benefit of creation and its creatures, because the word Śatāvarttā also means the medicinal herb *Asparagus*. This, together with a pestle, clearly means 'grinding coarse herbs, which are generally not eatable in their raw form, into a fine power with the help of the pestle, as the grinding of asparagus in a mortar by a pestle in the present case, so as to make them useable by the people.

[2] The word Surabhi literally means the following—one who has a divine fragrance and a pleasant aroma emanating from him; a divine cow with this name who is the patron Goddess and the progenitor of the cows; Tulasī or the basil plant which also gives out a sweet and pleasant aroma and is considered the holiest plant which is most dear to Lord Viṣṇu who accepts its leaves as a substitute for Lakṣmī. That is, even as Surabhi is the mother of holy cows, you too are the great mother of all honourable, auspicious, holy, good and noble things in this world; you represent the best of virtues. The pleasant aroma is a metaphor for divinity, holiness, auspiciousness, sublimity and authority that is emanating from you and which are your hallmarks. Something which is spiritually elevating for the soul as opposed to that which makes one restless, negatively charged or excited and become nervous. You are like Tulasī which is as dear to Lord Viṣṇu as his divine consort Lakṣmī.]

सुरेन्द्रमाता सुद्युम्ना (970) सुषुम्ना सूर्यसंस्थिता।
समीक्षा सत्प्रतिष्ठा च निर्वृत्तिर्ज्ञानपारगा।। 147।।
surendramātā sudyumnā (970) suṣumnā sūryasaṃsthitā /
samīkṣā satpratiṣṭhā ca nirvṛttirjñānapāragā //

You are the mother of Surendra (literally, the king of Gods; here meaning Indra. That is, you are Aditi who is the mother of Gods). [970] You are the glorious splendour, the auspicious brightness, the divine radiance and the stupendous dazzle of the Sun and its rays. You are known as Suṣumnā[1]. You are established in the Sun and are its vital source of stupendous energy, brightness, light, splendour, dazzle and radiance. You are the one who reviews and investigates everything; you view everything, debate on it, discriminate between the good and the bad and then decide upon the punishment or reward which is commensurate with it; you are the judge. You have an honourable and dignified presence; you have a good name and fame; your majesty, glories and grandeur are well established and lauded. You are the virtues of renunciation, dispassion and detachment personified. You are the wisest and erudite, sagacious and scholarly, expert and enlightened in the knowledge of the sublime and transcendental (147).

[Note :—[1]You are that stupendous vital energy which is sought to be aroused by an Yogī or ascetic during his Yoga or meditation exercise during which this energy—which is trapped in the coiled subtle energy center called Kuṇḍalinī present at the base of the spine—is released and it travels upwards through the Suṣumnā nerve or vein located at the core of the spinal cord. This energy snakes right up to the top of the head. When this happens, the Yogī is said to achieve the highest level of bliss and felicity, and he experiences Brahma. So this Suṣumnā nerve is regarded as the 'royal highway' leading to Brahma, the supreme, transcendental, sublime and subtle Lord of creation. In the present context, this epithet means that the Goddess is the medium by which a seeker/ aspirant can attain the beatitude and felicity associated with Brahma.]

धर्मशास्त्रार्थकुशला धर्मज्ञा धर्मवाहना।
धर्माधर्मविनिर्मात्री (980) धार्मिकाणां शिवप्रदा।। 148।।
dharmaśāstrārthakuśalā dharmajñā dharmavāhanā /
dharmādharmavinirmātrī (980) dhārmikāṇāṃ śivapradā //

You are expert in the tents, canons and the different shades of meaning of the different 'Dharma Śāstras' (the scriptures). [That is, you are an expert in the hidden, subtle and sublime meaning, the different shades of interpretation, the various connotations and applications of the tenets and maxims as enshrined in the canons of the holy scriptures and other religious treatises. You are highly qualified as well as well versed in these texts and their canons; you are skilled, wise, scholarly and well learned in them.] You know the truthful meaning of what constitutes Dharma (i.e. what is righteous, noble, proper and virtuous). You are the flag bearer of Dharma; you are the vehicle, the carrier, the container, the receptacle and the upholder of Dharma. [See also verse nos. 133, 149 and 150.] [980] You create both Dharma as well as its opposite counterpart, the Adharma. [That is you create both the good aspect as well as the bad in this creation; you create both evils and virtues, the noble and the ignoble, the righteous and the unrighteous, the auspicious and the inauspicious. There is no astonishment in it, because as a creator, the Goddess creates both the opposing forces of nature which counter balance each other even as a magnate has both the north and the south poles in the same piece, one attracting and other repelling—see also verse no. 149, word no. 3.] You provide auspiciousness and bliss to those who follow the path of Dharma diligently, who are good, righteous, noble and virtuous (148).

धर्मशक्तिर्धर्मयी विधर्मा विश्वधर्मिणी। धर्मान्तरा धर्ममध्या धर्मपूर्वी धनप्रिया।।149।।

dharmaśaktirdharmayī vidharmā viśvadharmiṇī /
dharmāntarā dharmamadhyā dharmapūrvī dhanapriyā //

You are the inherent 'Śakti of Dharma'. [That is, you are the divine force, the driving energy, the fame and renown, the powers and prowess, the potent and strength, the glory and majesty, the vitality and drive that comes to a person who follows the path of Dharma, or the path marked by the virtues of righteousness, nobility of thought and deeds, probity and propriety. You are the innate quality that distinguishes Dharma; you are the vitality, the spirit, the energy and the strength of Dharma. In other words, you represent that subtle but sublime and remarkable force that enables Dharma to acquire its reputation, its strength and its vitality. You are at the core of Dharma; you form its base and its backbone.] You are a personification of Dharma; you are an embodiment, an image of it. But most paradoxically, you represent even the opposite of Dharma, which is anti-Dharma or Adharmaa, i.e. those aspects which have virtues opposite to what constitutes Dharma (even as there is a 'Christ' and an 'antichrist') (see verse no. 148, word no. 4 in this context). You stand for universal Dharma, or those tenets, those canons, those axioms or maxims that are universally applicable to the entire creation. [In other words, you follow universal laws and virtues applicable to all the creatures, such as having equanimity and fortitude, treating all alike and being compassionate and merciful to the humble ones. You do not believe in sectarianism.] You are the end, the middle and the beginning of Dharma. [That is, you encompass the whole gamut of the definition of Dharma. No quality or virtue that comes under the purview of Dharma escapes you or do not apply to you. See also verse nos. 133, 148 and 150.] You love Dhana or wealth (i.e. you are found of spiritual wealth; the word does not refer to the wealth of this perishable world)[1] (149).

[Note :—[1]The last word 'Dhana Priya' literally means one who loves wealth. But the wealth here does not mean worldly wealth or worldly riches such as material objects of comfort and pleasure, pomp and pageantry. The 'wealth' here refers to the spiritual wealth, the wealth of good virtues and qualities, the wealth of fame and name, the wealth of auspiciousness and holiness, of divinity and sublimity, of righteousness and virtuousness, of magnanimity and graciousness, of charity and large heartedness, of mercy and compassion etc.]

धर्मोपदेशा (990) धर्मात्मा धर्मलभ्या धराधरा।
कपाली शाकलामूर्तिः कलाकलितविग्रहा।। 150।।
dharmopadeśā (990) dharmātmā dharmalabhyā dharādharā /
kapālī śākalāmūrtiḥ kalākalitavigrahā //

[990] You are an exponent of Dharma and you preach it (i.e. you, propound, enunciate, elucidate, expound, explain and elaborate on the different aspects of religious cannons and tenets of the scriptures). You are Dharmātmā (literally, the upright and righteous soul; one who diligently follows and upholds the path and tenets of Dharma; one who is righteous, noble and virtuous). You are attainable by Dharma (i.e. the only way to please you, to gain access to you and to find emancipation and salvation is through the path of Dharma). You bear the earth. [That is, the earth is sustained by Dharma; it is Dharma that protects that earth and its inhabitants that depend upon it from complete destruction at the hands of unrighteousness and evil forces which lead to anarchy and mayhem.] You are known as Kapālī (one who holds a hollowed out and upturned skull in the hand and uses it as a pot for collecting a drink). You are an image of Śākalā, which is branch of the Ṛg Veda. [That is, you are a personification of the sacred hymns contained in the Ṛg Veda. You exemplify them. You are as holy, pure, revered and sacred as those hymns; you are honourable as the holy scripture itself; you embody all the transcendental knowledge contained in any one of the branches of the Ṛg Veda, like the Śākalā branch.] Your form and image has been most beautifully, thoughtfully, skillfully, wisely and adroitly conceived, imagined or visualised. [That is, your divine and sublime form that is being worshipped and admired in this Canto by using 1008 words or names to describe it has been

conceived or conceptualised by great sages and seers after careful thought and consideration. Your form has a more beautiful, more profound ramification than that which apparently meets the eyes. It has a spiritual and metaphysical aspect. It is not the gross body that is seen by the eye here in the battlefield of Puṣkara, but your truth is subtle, sublime and transcendental. In a more mundane meaning, the word means that the goddess has a most beautifully shaped form, is most charming and attractive, well contoured, well proportioned and well endowed with majesty and grandeur. Obviously, this is not the case with Mahākālī, because she is very horrifying and ugly to look at in the battlefield. So, the Goddess referred to here is not her physical form but her more sublime, ethereal and subtle form as the divine cosmic Śakti.] (150)

धर्मशक्तिविनिर्मुक्ता सर्वशक्त्याश्रया।
सर्वा सर्वेश्वरी (1000) सूक्ष्मा सुसूक्ष्मज्ञानरूपिणी।। 151।।
dharmaśaktivinirmuktā sarvaśaktyāśrayā /
sarvā sarveśvarī (1000) sūkṣmā susūkṣmajñānarūpiṇī //

You are that Śakti of Dharma (authority, energy, strength, power, vitality and force incumbent with righteousness) which is special, which is distinguished and stands apart from all the rest of the Śaktis or conventional forces in creation. Your Śakti is transcendental and sublime, supreme and subtle, most almighty and stupendously powerful and potential, because it is founded on Dharma, and it is not constrained by any conventional or traditional definitions. You are the habitat, the refuge, the resting place, the seat and the foundation of all the Śakti present in this creation. You are supreme, exalted and the highest aughority [1000] You are the Lord, the supreme mistress, the divine Goddess and the Authority of all. You are fine, ingenius, sublime and subtle. You are an embodiment and an image of that knowledge which is most sublime and subtle, most minute and microscopic (i.e. a knowledge that requires a sharp and penetrating intellect, a discriminating mind, a sense of deep wisdom and relevant skills of surgical insight to comprehend, understand and grasp it) (151).

प्रधानपुरुषेशाना महापुरुषसाक्षिणी। सदाशिवा वियन्मूर्तिदेवमूर्तिरमूर्तिका (1008)।।152।।
pradhānapuruṣeśānā mahāpuruṣasākṣiṇī /
sadāśivā viyanmūrtidevamūrtiramūrtikā (1008) //

You are the chief Authority (literally, the chief Puruṣa; here referring to the Virāṭ Puruṣa or the macrocosmic primary male aspect of creation); you are Īśāna (or Lord Śiva personified). You are a proof to establish the existence of that 'Mahā Puruṣa', literally that 'great male' (as referred in words 1 and 2 earlier). You are eternally beautiful, truthful and auspicious as Lord Śiva is. [1008] You are an image of 'Vyoma' or the sky (i.e. you are as vast, fathomless, measureless and infinite as well as pristine pure, spotless and without any taints as the sky element; you pervade uniformally in the whole cosmos just like the space which pervades everything from inside and outside—see also verse nos. 23 and 82). You are all the Gods personified in your single being, but at the same time, you are formless and attributeless; you have no gross body; you do not have any image (because you are subtle and sublime, formless and attributeless), and you go beyond definition, comprehension and logic. I most reverentially bow before you' (152).

एवं नाम्नां सहस्रेण तुष्टाव रघुनन्दनः। कृतांजलिपुटो भूत्वा सीतां हृष्टतनूरुहाम्।।153।।

evaṃ nāmnāṃ sahasreṇa tuṣṭāva raghunandanaḥ /
kṛtāṃjaliputo bhūtvā sītāṃ hṛṣṭatanūruhām //

With these prayers which consisted of 1008 divine, glorious, magnificent and marvelous names of the supreme Goddess, each name standing for one or more of the different distinguished characteristics and virtues of her and listed from verse nos. 17 to 152 of this canto, Raghunandana (Śrī Rāma) felt very contented, exhilarated and thrilled. He bowed reverentially before Sītā (in her manifestation as Mahākālī) with joined hands (153).

भारद्वाज महाभागा यश्चैतस्तोत्रमद्भुतम्। पठेद्वापि स याति परमं पदम्।।154।।

bhāradvāja mahābhāgā yaścaitastotramadbhutam /
paṭhedvāpi sa yāti paramaṃ padam //

[Sage Vālmīki then paused for a while. He felt exhilarated and thrilled himself. He drew his breath and proclaimed—] 'Oh Bhāradvāja, the fortunate one ! Anyone who hears or studies as well as teaches or preaches this most marvelous, fascinating, remarkable, glorious, grand, unparalleled and magnificent Stotras (hymns or prayers offered to a deity to praise and glorify it) is able to attain the supreme stature of existence called the 'Parama Pada', which is the most exalted, the most sublime, the most glorious, the most honourable state attainable by a soul (154).

[Note :—In Vedānta, this Parama Pada is equivalent to emancipation and salvation. That is, it is the merger of the microcosmic individual soul of the creature with its parent, the macrocosmic all-pervading soul of the cosmos known as supreme Brahma. Here, the Goddess is represented as the energy and vitality of that supreme Brahma revealed for the benefit of the devotees of Brahma. So, the Parama Pada is the attainment of that Brahma. Literally, the word 'Pada' means 'feet' and 'Parama' means the 'supreme and the most exalted'. So, 'Parama Pada' means the attainment of the supreme, holy, divine and august feet of the chosen deity as an accomplishment of salvation.]

ब्रह्मक्षत्रियविड्योनिर्ब्रह्म प्राप्नोति शाश्वतम्।
शूद्रः सद्गतिमाप्नोति धनधान्यविभूतयः ।। 155 ।।
brahmakṣatriyaviḍyonirbrahma prāpnoti śāśvatam /
śūdraḥ sadgatimāpnoti dhanadhānyavibhūtayaḥ //

By reading and preaching these hymns, Brāhmins, Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas are able to attain the universal, immortal and eternal Brahmā, while the Śūdras get redemption of their souls as well as material wealth and prosperity, glory and renown in this world (155).

भवन्ति स्तोत्रमहात्म्यादेतत्स्वस्त्ययनं महत्। मारीभये राजभये तथा चोराग्निजे भये।।156।।
bhavanti stotramahātmyādetatsvastyayanaṃ mahat /
mārībhaye rājabhaye tathā corāgnije bhaye //

This Stotras (sacred hymns) has stupendous and remarkable potentials to provide great auspiciousness and welfare. It eliminates/ dispels fears of epidemics, fear of persecution by the king, fear from thieves and fire (156).

व्याधीनां प्रभवे घोरे शत्रू थाने च संकटे। अनावृष्टिभये विप्र सर्वशान्तिकरं परम्।।157।।
vyādhīnāṃ prabhave ghore śatrū thāne ca saṃkaṭe /
anāvṛṣṭibhaye vipra sarvaśāntikaraṃ param //

It provides great solace and succour from grave and serious maladies as well as it alleviates fears from being tormented by enemies. It gives relief from drought and famine (157).

यद्यदिष्टतमंयस्य तत्सर्वंस्तोत्रतो भवेत्। यत्रैतत्पठ्यते सम्यक् सीतानामसहस्त्रकम्।।158।।
yadyadiṣṭatamaṃyasya tatsarvaṃstotrato bhavet /
yatraitatpaṭhtyate samyak sītānāmasahasrakam //

This Stotra (prayer, hymns) has the potentials to fulfill all the desires, aspirations, wishes, hopes and expectations of those who read it with devotion, conviction and faith. This Stotra, known as 'the thousand names of Sītā'—which eulogises the divine Goddess' great virtues and glories, her majesty and magnificence, her marvelous qualities and potentials—should be read wholly and continuously, from the very beginning to its end, without any disruption or break (158).

रामेण सहिता देवी तिष्ठत्यसंशयम्। महापापातिपापानिविलयं यान्ति सुव्रत।।159।।
rāmeṇa sahitā devī tiṣṭhatyasaṃśayam /
mahāpāpātipāpānivilayaṃ yānti suvrata //

Oh the righteous and auspicious one ! Whenever this happens (or, whenever these Stotras are read, chanted, heard, taught or studied and recited), the Goddess comes and presents herself there alongside Śrī Rāma; there is no doubt about it. Oh Suvrat (the one who keeps righteous vows and is righteous himself, a reference to sage Bhāradvāja) ! The greatest and the gravest of sins come to an end and are dispelled, leaving behind no adverse consequences in their wake as a beneficial effect of this Stotra (honouring and praising the divine aspect of Sītā with her 1008 names symbolising the great virtues and potential powers of the great cosmic Śakti or energy or vitality of Brahma that had revealed itself in her form to eliminate all the evils forces from the face of the earth and restore the balance in favour of goodness and righteousness) (159).

Thus ends canto 25 of the ancient epic called Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa written by sage Vālmīki describing how Śrī Rāma had reverentially prayed to Sītā, in her manifestation as Mahākālī, with 1008 names signifying her divinity, glories and potentials as the divine Mother Goddess or the cosmic Śakti of this creation.

* * *

Canto 26

Śrī Rāma continues to pray to Sītā; her reverting back to her original form from Mahākālī; preparation to return to Ayodhyā

In the earlier canto no. 25, Śrī Rāma had fervently prayed to the ferocious, unrelenting and angry form of Sītā as Mahākālī, the great black Goddess of the death and destruction. Then he requested her to calm down, and Sītā regained her original pleasant, gentle and sober form and composure (verse no. 3). Once again, Śrī Rāma reverentially prayed to that great Goddess, now as Sītā in her auspicious form as compared to her unconventional form as Mahākālī of the earlier canto. Pleased, the great Goddess then blessed Śrī Rāma, and the couple made final preparations to return home to Ayodhyā (verse no. 47). Victory over the thousand headed Rāvaṇa is celebrated by the Gods by beating kettle drums and showering flowers on Śrī Rāma and Sītā (verse no. 46). We also come to learn why Śrī Rāma is dark complexioned (verse no. 41).

एवं नामसहस्रेण स्तुत्वऽसौ रघुनन्दनः। भूय प्रणम्य प्रीतात्मा प्रोवाचेदं कृतांजलिः।।1।।

evaṃ nāmasahasreṇa stutva'sau raghunandanaḥ /
bhūya praṇamya prītātmā provācedaṃ kṛtāṃjaliḥ //

Raghunandana (Śrī Rāma) reverentially prayed to Sītā (or sang holy eulogies in her majesty's honour) using the thousand names. Then he joined his hands once again in humility and reverence. He said— (1).

यदेत्तदैश्वरं रूपं घोरं ते परमेश्वरि। भीतोऽस्मि साम्प्रतं दृष्ट्वा रूपमन्यत्यप्रदर्शय।।2।।

yadettadaiśvaraṃ rūpaṃ ghoraṃ te parameśvari /
bhīto'smi sāṃprataṃ dṛṣṭvā rūpamanyatyapradarśaya //

'Oh the supreme Goddess (Mahākālī)! This formidable, fierce and stupendously colossus form of yours is scaring me. Hence, please calm down and come back to your original gentle, sober, sweet and pleasing form as Sītā, the form which I love and wish to see' (2).

एवमुक्ताथ सा देवी तेन रामेण मैथिली। संहृत्य दर्शयामास स्वं रूपं परमं पुनः।।3।।

evamuktātha sā devī tena rāmeṇa maithilī /
saṃhṛtya darśayāmāsa svaṃ rūpaṃ paramaṃ punaḥ //

When Śrī Rāma requested Maithilī (literally the daughter of Mithila, the city of her birth; here referring to Sītā), she shed her horrifying form (as Mahākālī) and reverted back to her former self (as Sītā) which was charming, gentle, mild and pleasant to behold (3).

कांचनाम्बुरुहप्रख्यं पद्मोत्पलसुगन्धिकम्। सुनेत्रं द्विभुजं सौम्यं नीलालकविभूषितम्।।4।।
kāṃcanāmburuhaprakhyaṃ padmotpalasugandhikam /
sunetraṃ dvibhujaṃ saumyaṃ nīlālakavibhūṣitam //

[The form of Sītā, the queen consort of Śrī Rāma, is being described here now—] She was beautiful, glorious, charming and radiant like a golden lotus. She resembled the petals of such a flower—which emanated a sweet and pleasant fragrance. She had charming and beautiful eyes as well as two arms. She was adorned by curly hairs which had the shade of light blue colour. She presented a most gentle, sober, pleasant and charming picture (4).

रक्तमादाम्बुजतलं सुरक्तकरपल्वम्। श्रीमद्विशालसद्वृत्तललाटतिलकोज्जवलम्।।5।।
raktamādāmbujatalaṃ suraktakarapalvam /
śrīmadviśālasadvṛttalalāṭatilakojjavalam //

Her feet were pink or red in colour and so were her palms. [This is because chaste married women in India, whose husband is alive, usually paint their feet and palms with a red dye called Mehandī which is a paste made from the leaves of the myrtle plant). Her forehead was broad, regal and majestic; it was adorned by a bright Tilaka Mark (usually it is a bright red dot put on the forehead of a Hindu women) as a symbol of her honour, glory, fame and fortunes—collectively known as the virtues of 'Śrī'[1] (5).

[Note :—[1]A specially prepared powder called 'Śrī' made from turmeric and a dye is used to make the Tilaka mark on the forehead. Sandalwood powder is also used as an ingredient of Śrī. The word 'Śrī' also refers to an ornament called 'Bendi' worn on the forehead, in the center of the hair line which is parted at the center of the head. It also means the vermillion mark put on the head of a married woman. The word 'Śrī' generally refers to the virtues of glory, fame, wealth and fortunes which are deemed to be present and available for a woman if her husband is alive; for a married woman, her husband is her Śrī.]

भूषितं चारुसर्वांगं भूषणैरभिशोभितम्। दधानं सुरसां मालां विशालां हेमनिर्मिताम्।।6।।
bhūṣitaṃ cārusarvāṃgaṃ bhūṣaṇairabhiśobhitam /
dadhānaṃ surasāṃ mālāṃ viśālāṃ hemanirmitām //

Her entire body was decorated by beautiful ornaments. She wore a large garland made of gold (6).

ईषस्मितं सुविम्बोष्ठं नूपुराम्बरसंयुतम्। प्रसन्नवदनं दिव्यमनन्तमहिमास्पदम्।।7।।

īṣasmitaṃ subimboṣṭhaṃ nūpurāmbarasaṃyutam /
prasannavadanaṃ divyamanantamahimāspadam //

Her lips had a sweet smile on them; they were of a glowing red colour. She wore anklets and beautiful clothes called Ambara. She had a cheerful and happy face. She looked magnificent, glorious, divine and sublime. She was a repository of infinite glories and majesties, and her fame had no end (7).

तदीदृशं समालोक्य रूपं रघुकुलोत्तमः। भीतिं संत्यज्य हृष्टात्मा बभाषे परमेश्वरीम्।।8।।

tadīdṛśaṃ samālokya rūpaṃ raghukulottamaḥ /
bhītiṃ saṃtyajya hṛṣṭātmā babhāṣe parameśvarīm //

The most exalted Raghu (Śrī Rāma) saw her (Sītā) in her usual form and this caused him to shed all fears of her. He felt very exhilarated and praised the supreme Goddess called Parameśvarī (8).

अद्य मे सफलं जन्म अद्य मे सफलं तपः। यन्मे साक्षात्त्वमव्यक्ता प्रसन्ना दृष्टिगोचरा।।9।।

adya me saphalaṃ janma adya me saphalaṃ tapaḥ /
yanme sākṣāttvamavyaktā prasannā dṛṣṭigocarā //

He said, 'My birth and doing of Tapa (austerities, penances and observing religious vows) have borne fruit today that you, who is essentially formless and attributeless, have revealed yourself in front of my eyes so that I can have your divine sight. You have been pleased by me, and are gracious and kind upon me (9).

त्वया सृष्टं जगत्सर्वं प्रधानाद्यं त्वयि स्थितम्। त्वय्येव लीयते देवि त्वमेव च परागतिः।।10।।

tvayā sṛṣṭaṃ jagatsarvaṃ pradhānādyaṃ tvayi sthitam /
tvayyeva līyate devi tvameva ca parāgatiḥ //

It is you who has created the entire world. All the important authorities of this creation from the beginning, the chief Gods and the main elements (such as space, wind, fire, water, earth), are all established in you (i.e. they have their origin in you, they are founded upon you, they are protected by you and sustained by you). Oh Goddess! All this (i.e. the entire creation) finally dissolves in or merges with you at the end. You are the ultimate end and the supreme stature called Parama Pada for all (10).

वदन्ति केचित्त्वामेव प्रकृतिं विकृतेः पराम्। अपरे परमात्मज्ञाः शिवेति शिवसंश्रये।।11।।

vadanti kecittvāmeva prakṛtiṃ vikṛteḥ parām/
apare paramātmajñāḥ śiveti śivasaṃśraye//

You are praised and lauded as the supreme, transcendental entity that is beyond the purview of either Prakṛti (the positive aspects of Nature) or Vikṛti (the negative aspects of Nature—see verse no. 31 also)[1]. Those who are wise and well versed in the supreme and transcendental knowledge of the Parmātmā (the Supreme Soul of creation, the Lord God) call you Śivā[2] because you have taken the shelter and remain under the protection of Śiva (the third God in the Hindu Trinity who is charged with the function of creating death and causing the conclusion of the creation; he is considered the wisest amongst the Gods of the trinity, the others being Brahmā and Viṣṇu) (11).

[Note :—[1]The word 'Prakṛti' means nature, temperament, inclinations and habits of a person, besides Nature which is the gross manifestation of Brahma and is revealed in the form of the world. Those virtues that are good, nurture life, while those that are evil and bad, lead to decay, decadence and ruin. The Goddess is the supreme authority; she is like a judge or king who gives rewards for good deeds and awards punishment for bad deeds, but himself remains aloof and uninvolved.

[2]The word 'Śiva' means beautiful, auspicious, holy, truthful, wise and enlightened; it means 'one who redeems from sins and liberates from sufferings'. Since, according to mythology, Pārvatī is the divine consort of Lord Śiva, she is known as 'Śivā' because she is dependent upon him, she is his divine consort.]

त्वयि प्रधानः पुरुषो महान्ब्रह्मा तथेश्वरः। अविद्या नियतिर्माया कालाद्याः शतशोऽभवन्।।12।।

tvayi pradhānaḥ puruṣo mahānbrahmā tatheśvaraḥ/
avidyā niyatirmāyā kālādyāḥ śataśo'bhavan//

The 'chief Puruṣa' (i.e. the Virāṭ Puruṣa who was the first cosmic revelation of Brahma; the macrocosmic Male aspect of creation; Lord Viṣṇu who is the chief authority and the main God who sustains and nourishes the creation; according to Purāṇas, the God from whom the creator Brahmā and the concluder Śiva had been born—see also verse no. 21), the great Brahmā (the creator of the universe who emerged atop a divine lotus that had emerged from the navel of the Virāṭ Puruṣa as Lord Viṣṇu), the Īśvara (here referring to Lord Śiva, the concluder of the world), the Avidyā (ignorance, lack of truthful knowledge), Niyati (destiny), Māyā (delusions, illusions and hallucination; the factor which was responsible for the creation of this deluding world), Kāla (time, circumstance, death and decay)—hundreds of them are present in you (12).

त्वं हि सा परमा शक्तिरनन्ता परमेष्ठिनी। सर्वभेदविनिर्मुक्ता सर्वभेदाश्रया निजा।।13।।

tvaṃ hi sā paramā śaktiranantā parameṣṭhinī /
sarvabhedvinirmuktā sarvabhedāśrayā nijā //

You are the supreme Authority, its energy, strength, vitality, prowess and powers. You are eternal, without an end, infinite, fathomless and measureless. You are known as Parmeṣṭhī (because you personify all the divine Gods at once—such as the creator Brahmā, the sustainer Viṣṇu, the annihilator Śiva, the macrocosmic Virāṭ Puruṣa who is the macrocosmic gross body of Brahma, the invisible authority that is the Supreme Soul of the creation, the most powerful and potent Fire-God, and the first human of the world, called Manu—see also verse no. 49 and 75 of canto 25). You are free from the different faults associated with all types of differences of opinion, views and thoughts, distinctions and schisms leading to duality, disparities, debates and arguments (i.e. you are none of these; you are one, uniform, seamless, immutable, un-fractionable, unequivocal, beyond any confusion and doubt; you are non dual, equal in every respect, universal and similar under all conditions). But paradoxically, you are the foundation upon which, and the fount from where, all the differences and distinctions, all the disparities and schisms in this world originate; you are their shelter and resting place. [This is because you are the creator of both the good and the bad. All the opposite forces in the universe which exist, perhaps to maintain an equilibrium, have their origin in you—there is the rainy season as well as dry summer, there is the vast ocean full of water as well as the parch dry desert, there is the night as well as the day, there are good people who are exemplarily virtuous as well as those who are evil, pervert and wicked to the core. They are all your offspring. Where will they go without you; where else will they find shelter if not with you!] You are what you are; you treat all of them alike as if all are your own children (because you are the supreme mother of the entire creation) (13).

त्वामधिष्ठाय योगेशि! पुरुषः परमेश्वरीम्। प्रधानाद्यं जगत्कृत्स्नं करोति विकरोति च।।14।।

tvāmadhiṣṭhāya yogeśi ! puruṣaḥ parameśvarīm /
pradhānādyaṃ jagatkṛtsnaṃ karoti vikaroti ca //

Oh the most exalted, revered and famous ascetic (who is the patron Goddess of Yogīs or ascetics. See note no.[3] of verse no. 16 below). You are the supreme Goddess who has the authority of the supreme Lord, the Puruṣa (i.e. the Virāṭ Puruṣa or Lord Viṣṇu), vested in you. As the primary and primordial supreme Authority and the chief Being, you create and then conclude the entire creation (14).

त्वयैव संगतो देवः स्वमानन्दं समश्नुते। त्वमेव परमानन्दस्त्वमेवानन्ददायिनी ।।15।।

tvayaiva saṃgato devaḥ svamānandaṃ samaśnute /
tvameva paramānandastvamevānandadāyinī //

It is by your company (i.e. grace and blessing) that the Gods enjoy the bliss and happiness that comes with self realisation and enlightenment. It is you who bestows supreme bliss, beatitude, joy and felicity (15).

त्वमेव परमं व्योम महाज्योतिर्निरंजनम्। शिवं सर्वगतं सूक्ष्मं परं ब्रह्म सनातनम् ।।16।।

tvameva paramaṃ vyoma mahājyotirniraṃjanam /
śivaṃ sarvagataṃ sūkṣmaṃ paraṃ brahma sanātanam //

You are the one who is known as, or who has revealed herself, as the great space of the sky[1] (which is vast, fathomless, measureless and without any boundaries or parameters; i.e. the Goddess has these characteristics and virtues). You are the supreme and transcendental light and illumination that has expelled darkness from this world[2]. You are Nirañjana, i.e. you are invisible, subtle, sublime, pure, holy and divine; you do not have any faults or blemishes in you. You are Śiva (pure, truthful, auspicious, enlightened, beautiful, redeemer and liberator)[3]; are all pervading and omnipresent; are minute, minuscule, subtle, sublime and microcosmic as well as macroscopic in essence and nature; are the supreme, transcendental, sublime Brahma; and are eternal, infinite, perpetual, primary, primeval, truthful and universal in nature and essence (16).

[Note :—[1]The word 'sky or Vyoma' is used to describe the Goddess' vastness, purity, all-pervading and all-encompassing virtue, her immanence and immutability. Everything that exists is present in the Vyoma or the sky—the sky is present outside as well as inside of everything. For example, if we take a pitcher, the sky is present outside the pitcher as well as inside the space enclosed by body of the pitcher. The sky was also the first element of creation, because the most subtlest of the 5 elements, the sound, was present in it. See also canto 25, verse nos. 23, 82 and 152.

[2] The word 'Jyoti' simply means light and illumination, something which removes darkness. Darkness, on the other hand, is the symbol for ignorance and delusion creating a chain of illusions and hallucination in their wake. All the phantoms, ghosts and horrifying views, which are basically false and are faults created by an ignorant mind, are seen in the background of the darkness and they vanish in light. 'Ajñāna' or lack of knowledge is also symbolised by darkness. So by saying that the Goddess is light embodied, sage Vālmīki wishes to emphasise the point that where there is the light of enlightenment represented by the Goddess, there will be no scope of the existence of darkness symbolised by all the evil forces of creation. See also verse no. 22 of canto 25.

[3] The word 'Śiv or Śiva' has a wide variety of meaning—it stands for beauty, truth and enlightenment; for the one who is a redeemer of sins and the one who provides liberation from all the sufferings of this world; the god who provides Mokṣa or final emancipation and salvation by pronouncing the 'Tāraka Mantra', or the liberation providing divine word 'Rāma' in the ears of a dying person at the abode of Śiva in Vārāṇasī, which is a mythological holy pilgrim city where Śiva is supposed to live eternally. He is the patron God of ascetics or Yogīs as well as those who are enlightened and wise; that is why he is also known as Mahādeva, because he is the greatest amongst the Gods, he has the best of virtues that any God must possess—such as enlightenment and wisdom, renunciation and dispassion, doing constant Tapa and contemplation etc. Śiva is therefore an enlightened ascetic. He is a householder, because he has Pārvatī as his consort, but at the same time he is a renunciate ascetic par excellence because he remains ever engrossed in contemplation and mediation like a Saṃnyāsī (a renunciate) and a Yogī (an ascetic).]

त्वं शक्रः सर्वदेवानां ब्रह्मा ब्रह्मविदामपि। सांख्यानां कपिलो देवा रुद्राणामसि शंकरः।।17।।

tvaṃ śakraḥ sarvadevānāṃ brahmā brahmavidāmapi /
sāṃkhyānāṃ kapilo devā rudrāṇāmasi śaṃkaraḥ //

You are like Śakra[1] (Indra) who is the King (Lord) of all the Gods as well as the creation. You are like Brahmā[2], who is the patriarch creator of the Vedas as well as the rest of the creation, and therefore is the senior most among those who are wise, erudite, sagacious and enlightened about Brahma, the supreme, transcendental Soul of the cosmos. Amongst those who are expert in the philosophy of Sāṅkhya Śāstra[3], you are like Kapila who had first conceived, propounded and enunciated this particular school of philosophy. Amongst the Gods and the 11 Rudras[4], you are like Śaṅkara (Lord Śiva) who is the chief of the Rudras and considered the wisest and the most enlightened amongst the Gods (see note to verse no. 16 above) (17).

[Note :—[1]Indra is also known as Śakra; he is the King of Gods. So the Goddess is compared to him to indicate the fact that amongst the immortals, the great ones, the most exalted and honoured ones, she has the same importance and position as Indra has amongst the Gods. She is like their queen.

[2]Brahmā had created the four Vedas during the initial phases of creation. The latter are great repositories of all the knowledge that exist in creation. Every other form of knowledge is basically an elaboration, an explanation, an exposition, a re-interpretation of the primary knowledge which was encrypted by Brahmā in the Vedas. The Vedas are therefore an encyclopedia of knowledge. So those persons who wish to attain the exalted and honoured state of being recognised as wise, erudite, scholarly, sagacious, adroit and experts, should be well versed in the knowledge contained in the canọns of the Vedas. Since Brahmā was the primary source of this knowledge, and since he had pronounced this knowledge first, he is considered the senior most amongst such people who are wise and erudite. He is the forefather of all knowledge. Hence, the Goddess is compared to him to symbolise the fact that she is the most scholarly, learned, wise, enlightened, revered and honoured Being in creation.

[3]There are six schools in Hindu philosophy, and sage Kapila was the exponent of one of the schools known as Sāṅkhya Śāstra. This philosophy has been explained in detail in (i) canto 11, verse no. 42 and its note, and (ii) canto 25, verse no. 118 and its note.

[4]The 11 Rudras are the various manifestations of Lord Śiva—they are Mannu, Manu, Mahīnasa, Mahān, Śiva, Ṛtadhvaja, Ugrareta, Bhava, Kāla, Vāmadeva, and Dhṛtvrata—Ṛg Veda 1/43/1. The word Rudra means one who is angry, terrible and wrathful. The Goddess is terrible in her form as Mahākālī; she kills mercilessly. But this killing is a sort of punishment for the evil ones, so that goodness can prevail over evil and pervert factors of creation.]

आदित्यानामुपेन्द्रस्त्वं वसूनां चैव पावकः। वेदानां सामवेदस्त्वं गायत्रीच्छन्दसामपि।।18।।

ādityānāmupendrastvaṃ vasūnāṃ caiva pāvakaḥ /
vedānāṃ sāmavedastvaṃ gāyatrīcchandasāmapi //

You are Upendra amongst the twelve Ādityas (the mythological Suns). Amongst the Vasus, you are the Fire-God. Amongst the Vedas, you are the Sāma Veda. Amidst the various Chandas (poetical composition or a style of writing in which the hymns of the Vedas were composed), you are the Gāyatrī Chanda (considered the best system of writing hymns) (18).

[Note :—(a) There are twelve Ādityas or mythological suns. Upendra is the chief amongst them. The word also means an assistant of Indra who carries out the routine functions of Indra like a prime minister does in relation to a worldly king. See also canto 9, note to verse no. 18-21.

(b) The 'Vasus' are the various patron Gods who preside over the essentials of life; they are eight in number—Viṣṇu is the sustainer, Śiva who is the annihilator, Kubera who is the treasurer of the wealth of the Gods, the Sun, Water, Fire, Wealth represented by gems and gold, and 'Ray' representing glory and fame. The element 'Fire' is the most potent, prominent and essential force in creation, because without fire the world would freeze to death. Hence, the Fire-God is said to be the chief amongst the Vasus. See also canto 9, note to verse no. 18-21.

(c) There are four Vedas—the Ṛg, Sāma, Yajur and Atharva. The Sāma Vedas is considered the most lucid and beautiful from metaphysical point of view because it can be sung in the most melodious of tunes.

(d) The Gāyatrī Chanda has been used extensively in composing the hymns of the Sāma Veda. It is a style of verse composition adopted for writing the hymns of the Vedas. It consists of three stanzas or steps, each having eight letters or syllables. Hence, there are 8 × 3 = 24 letters in all in one Chanda.]

अध्यात्मविद्या विद्यानां गतीनां परमा गतिः। माया त्वं सर्वशक्तीनां कालः कलयतामपि।।19।।

adhyātmavidyā vidyānāṃ gatīnāṃ paramā gatiḥ/
māyā tvaṃ sarvaśaktīnāṃ kālaḥ kalayatāmapi//

In the field of knowledge and education, called Vidyā, you are akin to 'Adhyātma Vidyā' (or the science of spiritualism, metaphysics and transcendental Ātmā). Amongst the various destinations for a creature's soul, you are the final redemption, the supreme end which is called emancipation and salvation, and from where the soul does not have to re-enter the cycle of birth and death. This is known as Parama Pada.You are at the core, in the heart of the entire creation as the spark, as the basic dynamic driving force, as the primary subtle energy that powers all the forms of Śaktis (forces, strength, authorities, powers and potentials) that drive this creation. You are, as it were, the dynamo that keeps the industrious world running. As such, you are the primary 'Māyā Śakti' of creation (because it is Māyā that drives the world; it is Māyā in its various forms and manifestations that impels the creature to do what it does in this creation—see also canto 25, verse nos. 28, 36, 65, 90, 99 and 151). You are like Kāla who is the senior God amongst all those who can, or who have the authority and powers to bring to an end all that exist (i.e. you are the ultimate deciding authority that determines an end of anything, you are the force that actually facilitates such as end, you are the one who controls the destiny of all) (19).

ॐकारः सर्वगुह्यानां वर्णानां च द्विजोत्तमः। आश्रमाणां गृहस्थस्त्वमीश्वरणां महेश्वरः।।20।।
oṃkāraḥ sarvaguhyānāṃ varṇānāṃ ca dvijottamaḥ /
āśramāṇāṃ gṛhasthastvamīśvaraṇāṃ maheśvaraḥ //

You are Oṃkāra (which is a manifestation of Brahma and is the cosmic divine word that pervades the entire cosmos, encapsulating not only Brahma but also the entire gamut of creation in its ambit; it is used as a synonym for Brahma). It is most secret and profound, and you (Goddess Mahākālī or the supreme Goddess) are therefore like it[1]. Amongst the various Varaṇas[2] (sections or classes in society), you are akin to the most exalted Brāhmins. In the various Āśramas[3] (phases in life), you are a Gṛhastha (householder). Amongst all the Gods, you are Maheśvara[4], the great God known as Śiva, personified (20).

[Note :—[1]Oṃkāra is the divine word 'OM'. It is the primary sound consisting of three letters—A, U, M—symbolising creation, its birth, its growth and its conclusion respectively. At the end of pronouncing this word, mouth has to be closed indicating the silence that prevails at the end of the creation as well as in the deep recesses of the cosmos. This silence represents Brahma, because the creation has originated from silence, which is indicative of a state of 'no activity' representing the basic nature of Brahma that he does not do anything himself, but uses his divine Śakti, revealed in the form of the supreme Goddess, to do what he wants to do. According to Upaniṣads, OM is also called Praṇava, a synonym for the transcendental, supreme, subtle, sublime and attributeless Brahma. OM is the supreme Mantra. Mantras are divine letters, syllables or words having mystical powers, chanted or repeated to attain Brahma. It is invoked to honour any God; it is their glory personified and is their honour and title. OM is also invoked before the beginning of any religious activity, including the chanting of the hymns themselves, in order to invoke the blessings of the supreme Brahma. It is also pronounced at the end of all such activities, as a symbol of bowing and showing respect to that supreme Brahma. Hence, the goddess being the supreme authority and the divine mother of all, and because she is the manifestation of that supreme Brahma and represents his marvelous powers, she is also similar to OM. The word OM is used as a synonym for Brahma as well as the Goddess Mahākālī. The concept of OM requires a higher intellect to comprehend and understand. It is so profound and remarkable that it is beyond the intellectual reach of ordinary men. Hence it is the greatest secret, the greatest mystery of creation even as the primary nature and essential form of the Goddess is a great secret and a great mystery. See also canto 25, verse no. 32.

[2] The society has been divided into four sections or classes by ancient sages to regulate its functioning by delegation of authority and clearly specifying the jobs each section is supposed to do to maintain order and system in the world, to prevent overlapping of functions and avoid anarchy and chaos. These four sections are—(a) Brāhmins—the learned and teaching class; they also presided over religious functions as priests, because these functions were central to life in the Vedic period; (b) Kṣatriyas—they were the warrior, fighting, kingly class. They were assigned the job of giving protection to the society, dispensing justice and maintaining general law and order. (c) Vaiśyas—they were the trading and farming class responsible for commerce and wealth generation. They provided for the necessities for a comfortable life, and (d) the Śūdras—the service class of people whose main function was to free the other 3 classes from the humdrums of daily chores and concentrate their energies to the particular jobs assigned to those classes to which they belonged.

[3] The life of a man is divided into four segments or Āśramas—(a) Brahmacarya—this is the first phase of life in which a person studies the scriptures under the tutelage of a wise teacher. This phase of life is marked by austerities, keeping of vows, observing celibacy, abstinence and continence as well as leading a regimental life style, (b) Gṛhastha—when a person has studied and prepared himself to face the world, he comes back to his house and enters the second phase called Gṛhastha Āśrama which is a householder life. He marries, raises a family, produces wealth and helps to carry forward the cycle of creation. This is the most important and enjoyable phase as well as the most tough one because on the one hand there are the comforts and pleasure of the world to be enjoyed, and on the other hand there are the various tribulations and miseries of a family life and dealings with this deceptive world with all their accompanying horrifying problems, (c) Vānaprastha—this is the third phase when a man hands over the responsibilities of the world to his heirs and renounces his attachments to the house as well as the world, and heads for the forest, leaving the home for his next generation. It is

now that he goes on pilgrimage and prepares for the final stage of his life, and (d) Saṃnyāsa—this is the fourth and last stage of life when there is complete cutting off of all the ties with the world, spending time in contemplation and mediation, living a life of total renunciation and begging for food, and single mindedly aiming for emancipation and salvation. These concepts have been elaborately described in Nirvāṇopaniṣad of the Ṛg Veda tradition, in its verse nos. 83-87; an English version of this Upaniṣad has been included in the author's book 'Anthology of Ṛg Veda Upaniṣads' published separately.

[4]The word 'Īśvara' means the Lord God, and 'Mahā' means the great one. So the word Maheśvara refers to the great God Śiva who is the only God to be honoured with this title of Maheśvara. He is foremost amongst Gods for his wisdom, erudition, renunciation and enlightenment. He is the most holy and auspicious amongst the Gods and has the three eye of wisdom located at the tri-junction of his eyebrows and root of the nose. Hence he is also known as 'Trinetra'—meaning the one with three eyes. His symbol is the 'Liṅgam' which is shaped like the dome of a modern nuclear reactor signifying the fact that it encloses and represents the most glorious, the most stupendous, the most magnificent, the most remarkable and the most potent powers that are present in this creation.]

पुंसां त्वमेव पुरुषः सर्वभूतहृदि स्थितः। सर्वोपनिषदां देवि गुह्योपनिषदुच्यसे।।21।।

puṃsāṃ tvameva puruṣaḥ sarvabhūtahṛdi sthitaḥ/
sarvopaniṣadāṃ devi guhyopaniṣaducyase//

Amongst the males, you are Puruṣa (the Virāṭ Puruṣa who is the all-encompassing primary Male aspect of creation, or Lord Viṣṇu; i.e. you are the most supreme and exalted aspect of creation even as the Virāṭ Puruṣa was the primary aspect of creation—see verse no. 12). You reside in the heart of all mortal beings or all the creatures of this world. Oh Goddess! You symbolise the essence of all great secrets contained in all the Upaniṣads (which are metaphysical and theological treatises called Vedānta) (21).

ईशनां चासि भूपानां युगानां कृतमेव च। आदित्यः सर्वमार्गाणां वाचां देवी सरस्वती।।22।।

īśanāṃ cāsi bhūpānāṃ yugānāṃ kṛtameva ca/
ādityaḥ sarvamārgāṇāṃ vācāṃ devī sarasvatī//

Amongst the kings, you are like an Emperor or Īśa (Lord of kings). Amongst the four Yugas (the four large periods of times marking one cycle of creation and destruction of the world; these four Yugas are—

Sat, Tretā, Dvāpara and the present Kali), you are Sat Yuga (the first era which is considered the longest, the best, the most uncorrupt and during which Vedas and Vedic ritual occupied a central platform in the life of the world). Amongst all the paths open for a creature as well as the Gods, you represent that path taken by Āditya, the Sun-God, across the sky (i.e. you follow the path which is the best, most illuminated and glorious). You are Goddess Sarasvatī (the patron Goddess of speech, erudition, scholarship and wisdom) personified (22).

त्वं लक्ष्मीश्चारुरूपाणां विष्णुर्मायाविनामपि। अरुन्धती सतीनां त्वं सुपर्णः पततामसि।।23।।

tvaṃ lakṣmīścārurūpāṇāṃ viṣṇurmāyāvināmapi /
arundhatī satīnāṃ tvaṃ suparṇaḥ patatāmasi //

Amongst those who look beautiful, charming and attractive, you are Lakṣmī (the Goddess of wealth and the divine consort of Viṣṇu). Amongst the magicians, artful jugglers, skilled conjurers, illusion creators and mavericks, you are Lord Viṣṇu, the sustainer of creation. Amongst the Satīs (those women who are chaste, immaculate, loyal to their husbands, scrupulous, righteous and uncorrupt), you are Arundhatī (the wife of sage Vasiṣṭha, the moral preceptor of Śrī Rāma's family and the son of Brahmā). Amongst the birds, you are the legendary Garuḍa (the Eagle or Heron who is the mount of Lord Viṣṇu; he is said to be the swiftest, the most agile, the fastest and most active bird in creation) (23).

सूक्तानां पौरुषं सूक्तं ज्येष्ठं साम च सामसु। सावित्री ह्यासि जप्यानां यजुषां शतरुद्रियम्।।24।।

sūktānāṃ pauruṣaṃ sūktaṃ jyeṣṭhaṃ sāma ca sāmasu /
sāvitrī hyāsi japyānāṃ yajuṣāṃ śatarudriyam //

Amongst the Sūktas (hymns, prayers, invocations, sayings) of the Vedas, you are the Puruṣa Sūkta[1]. Amongst the hymns of the Sāma Veda, you are the Jyeṣṭha[2] hymn (which is the best, the senior most, the eldest and the earliest of the hymns). Amongst the Mantras (divine and holy words having mystical powers) used in doing Japa (repetition of these Mantras), you are Sāvitrī or Gāyatrī Mantra[3]. Amongst the Yajurs[4] (religious sacrifices), you are Śatarudra (literally, the fire sacrifice done by using the 100 named Stotra devoted to Lord Śiva, and since it has hundred names, it is known as Śata Rudra) (24).

[Note :—[1] The Puruṣa Sūkta is a devotional hymn dedicated to the Virāṭ Puruṣa. It describes in brief the genesis of creation as per Ṛg Veda, 10 division, verse no. 19, and Yajur Veda, 31 Chapter or division. It consists of 18 stanzas and a detailed English version of this is published in this author's book 'an anthology of Ṛg Veda Upaniṣad' published separately.

[2]The word 'Sām' or 'Sāma' means music and song. The Veda that was melodiously sung during fire sacrifices was therefore called the Sāma Veda. Song is the best form of expression and a refined mode of speech. It needs a sweet voice, knowledge about the finer nuances of classical music, and is generally indulged into by the higher echelons of society.

[3]The Sāvitrī Mantra is elaborately explained in 'Sāvitryupaniṣad' which is the 13 principal Upaniṣads belonging to the Sāma Veda tradition, and it has also been published separately by this author in his book titled 'Anthology of the Sāma Veda Upaniṣads'. It is also referred to as 'Gāyatrī Mantra' dedicated to the Sun-God.

The famous Gāyatrī Mantra is '***oṃ bhūrbhuvaḥ svaḥ tatsaviturvareṇyaṃ bhargo devasya dhīmahi dhiyo yo naḥ pracodyāt***' (Ṛg Veda 3/62/10; Sāma Veda 1462; Yajur Veda 3/35, 22/9, 30/2, 36/3) (The meaning of the Gāyatrī Mantra in full is as follows—'OM salutation! OM is the supreme, transcendental Brahma. He is the Lord of the earth, the sky and the heavens. That Brahma is luminous like the Sun. He is the best, most excellent, most exalted divine entity who is a destroyer of sins. May he inspire, infuse and propel our intellect with wisdom, erudition and enlightenment so that we are purified and move on the righteous path, have noble thoughts and follow noble deeds.'

[4]The word 'Yajur' means a religious ritual associated with the performance of a sacrifice. During these rituals, Mantras are chanted. The most elaborate, potent and difficult ritual is the one in which incantations of the Mantra is done using the hundred (Śata) names of Śiva (Rudra).]

पर्वतानां महामेरुनन्तो भागिनामसि। सर्वेषां त्वं परं ब्रह्म त्वन्मयं सर्वमेव हि।।25।।

parvatānāṃ mahāmerunanto bhāginām asi /
sarveṣāṃ tvaṃ paraṃ brahma tvanmayaṃ sarvameva hi //

Amongst the mountains, you are the great Mt. Meru. Amongst the 'fractions, parts, pieces, sections and divisions' (collectively called Bhaga), you are 'endless, infinite, measureless and limitless' (collectively known as Ananta). Verily, you are everything that exists (i.e. you embody everything in this creation). You are supreme, transcendental, sublime and subtle Brahma. All 'that' and 'this' which exist in this cosmos is existent in you, present in you, established and founded in you (25).

रूपं तवाशेषकलाविहीनमगोचरं निर्मलमेकरूपम्।
अनादिमध्यान्तमनन्तमाद्यं नमामि सत्यं तमसी परस्तात्।।26।।
rūpaṃ tavāśeṣakalāvihīnamagocaraṃ nirmalamekarūpam /
anādimadhyāntamanantamādyaṃ namāmi satyaṃ tamasī parastāt //

Your form is beyond the reach and purview of the various periods of time (e.g. past, present, future); it is uniform, unchangeable, immutable and universal; it is invisible and beyond the perception of sight; and it is pure, uncorrupt, pristine, immaculate, divine, holy, august, faultless, flawless and without any blemishes and taints of any kind. You and your form have no beginning, no middle and no end. Your divine, subtle and sublime form is endless, truthful and superior to and more exalted than your self. I most reverentially bow before you (26).

यदेव पश्यन्ति जगत्प्रसूतिं वेदान्तविज्ञानविनिश्चितार्थाः।
आनन्दमात्रं परमाभिधानं तदेव रूपं प्रणतोऽस्मि नित्यम्।।27।।
yadeva paśyanti jagatprasūtiṃ vedāntavijñānaviniścitārthāḥ /
ānandamātraṃ paramābhidhānaṃ tadeva rūpaṃ praṇato'smi nityam //

The refined and supreme knowledge contained in Vedānta (literally, the end of the Vedas, i.e. the Upaniṣads) has irrevocably and unequivocally decided, determined and conclusively established that you are the great mother of the entire creation (i.e. the entire creation has been born from you; it is your offspring). Wise and erudite persons see you, perceive you, witness you or observe you with this enlightened view. You are an image or an embodiment of pure bliss and felicity. You are the supreme destiny and the transcendently authority that lays down the rules and regulations, their modes and the methods as well as the codes of conduct and thought that are ought to be followed by the entire creation. I regularly, constantly and persistently visualise that supreme form of yours in the subtle eyes of my mind and heart. I most reverentially bow before it (i.e. your such a divine and majestic form) daily (27).

अशेषसूत्रान्तरसन्निविष्टं प्रधानसंयोगवियोगहेतुः।
तेजोमयं जन्मविनाश हीनं प्राणाभिधानं प्रणतोऽस्मि रूपम्।।28।।
aśeṣasūtrāntarasanniviṣṭaṃ pradhānasaṃyogaviyogahetuḥ /
tejomayaṃ janmavināśa hīnaṃ prāṇābhidhānaṃ praṇato'smi rūpam //

You are at the core, the center or the focal point of all that is regarded as whole, un-fractioned and immutable. [That is, you are essentially complete and whole; you represent that entity which cannot be divided or fractioned into smaller parts. There is nothing that remains behind after you are removed from anything. In fact you pervade and encompass everything from within and without.] You are the chief cause that creates either the union or the separation between any two entities. You are an embodiment of light and brilliance; you effuse and radiate illumination and brilliance; you are a glowing source of an incandescent light. You neither take birth nor are you subject to decay and destruction. You manifest yourself as 'Prāṇa' (literally meaning the breath of life present in a creature; the vital wind that makes a dead body alive) and determine as well as regulate its function, its flow and its activity. I bow and prostrate most respectfully before this magnificent form of yours (28).

आद्यन्तहीनं जगदात्मरूपं विभिन्नसंस्थं प्रकृतेः परस्तात्।
कूटस्थमव्यक्तवपुस्तवैव नमामि रूपं पुरुषाभिधानम्।। 29।।
ādyantahīnaṃ jagadātmarūpaṃ vibhinnasaṃsthaṃ prakṛteḥ parastāt /
kūṭasthamavyaktavapustavaiva namāmi rūpaṃ puruṣābhidhānam //

You have no beginning or an end. You are the Ātmā (soul) of the world. You assume diverse forms and are established everywhere in this myriad world. You are Mother Nature personified as 'Prakṛti', and at the same time you are beyond it. You occupy a high and exalted place; you are unchanging, imperishable, unalterable, secret, mysterious, hidden, concealed, immovable, steady and constant, hence you are honoured by the epithet Kūṭastha. You are un-manifested, attributeless, formless and beyond description, you are beyond the reach of speech, sight and other perceptions, hence you are called Avyakta. You are that supreme Puruṣa who has established the laws and regulation that govern the functioning of the cosmos (i.e. you are the Virāṭ Puruṣa in his manifestation as Viṣṇu and Brahmā who are the two divine Gods who have laid down laws of conduct for the creatures of this world). I bow most reverentially to that magnificent form of yours (29).

सर्वाश्रयं सर्वजगन्निधानं सर्वत्रगं जन्मविनाशहीनम्।
नतोऽस्मि ते रूपमणुप्रभेदमाद्यं महत्त्वे पुरुषानुरूपम्।। 30।।
sarvāśrayaṃ sarvajagannidhānaṃ sarvatragaṃ janmavināśahīnam /
nato'smi te rūpamaṇuprabhedamādyaṃ mahattve puruṣānurūpam //

You are the shelter, the refuge, the solace, the succour and the final resting place for all. You are the symbolic residence, the home, the dwelling place for the whole world (i.e. you give rest to and are the foundation for the entire creation; the whole world, as it exists, is founded upon you and is supported by you; even as a man goes home to rest at the end of the day, the whole creation finds rest in you at the end of its life cycle). You have access to all the places in creation; you can go everywhere without any hindrance (because you uniformally pervade the entire world; you are omnipresent and immanent). You are without a birth and death (i.e. you do not rise and set like the sun, you are not subject to decay and ruin like other mortal creatures). I bow most reverentially to your form which is as small and minute as the atom, which is eternal and infinite, which is glorious, majestic, stupendous, remarkable, marvelous and magnificent, and which is manifested as the macrocosmic Virāṭ Puruṣa of the creation. [That is, your form has such marvelous qualities that it can be as small as the atom representing the Ātmā of the individual creature, and at the same time, is as vast as the Virāṭ Puruṣa representing the body of the entire cosmos.] (30)

प्रकृत्यवस्थं त्रिगुणात्मबीजमैश्वर्यविज्ञानविरागधर्मैः।
समन्वितं देवि नतोऽस्मि रूपं द्विसप्तलोकात्मकमम्बुसंस्थम्।। 31।।
prakṛtyavasthaṃ triguṇātmabījamaiśvaryavijñānavirāgadhamariḥ /
samanvitaṃ devi nato'smi rūpaṃ dvisaptalokātmakamambusaṃstham //

You represent Prakṛti (Mother Nature—see verse no. 11 also). You are the seed from where emerges the so called Triguṇas—the triad of the qualities such as Sat, Raja and Tama which determine the characteristics, the temperaments, habits, inclinations, outlooks, thoughts, conducts and behaviours of all individuals (see also canto 25, verse no. 35). You have Aiśvarya (fame, majesty, grandeur, radiance and magnificence) as your divine virtues. You are an auspicious treasury of such virtues as Vijñāna—logical and rational knowledge, Virāga—renunciation, dispassion, detachment and indifference to the world and its material objects, and Dharma—righteousness, propriety, nobility and virtuousness (see also canto 25, verse nos. 148-151). You embody all the fourteen Lokas[1] (worlds) in yourself (i.e. all of them are present in your macrocosmic form) You are present even in the water[2]. Oh Goddess! I most reverentially bow and prostrate before you and your such a glorious and magnificent form (31).

[Note :—[1]The 14 Lokas mentioned here are the following—(i) 7 upper worlds according to Sāṅkhya Śāstra represented by the following words Bhuḥ, Bhuvaḥ, Svaḥ, Mahaḥ, Janaḥ, Tapaḥ, and Satyam, and (ii) the 7 underworlds according to Padma Purāṇa are the following—Atala, Vitala, Sutala, Rasātala, Talātala, Mahātala and Pātāla.

[2]The Goddess is depicted as being present in water to indicate the fact that she embodies and represents the life nourishing and sustaining virtues of water as well as the entire marine ecosystem that is a complete world of its own. As science has established, water is the basic, the first and primary element needed to foster life; without water there is no scope for life to exist—either in the macroscopic form or the microscopic form.]

विचित्रभेदं पुरुषैकनाथमनन्तभूतैर्विनिवासितं ते।
नतोऽस्मिरूपं जगदण्डसंज्ञमशेषवेदात्मकमेकमाद्यम्।। 32।।
vicitrabhedaṃ puruṣaikanāthamanantabhūtairvinivāsitaṃ te/
nato'smirūpaṃ jagadaṇḍasaṃjñamaśeṣavedātmakamekamādyam//

The various distinctions and differences, the different varieties and multiplicities, the myriad secrets and mysteries, the manifold variations of this world are most stupendous, magnificent, remarkable and marvelous to behold. [All of them, each one of them, are one or the other form of yours. Say for example—] There is the Puruṣa (the Virāṭ, the macrocosmic male who encompasses the entire cosmos), who is the one and the only Lord of creation and who has no end (i.e. who is eternal, infinite and endless). The various Bhūtas (the elements —space, wind, fire, water, earth) are your dwelling places (i.e. you are inherently present in all these Bhūtas, and since these Bhūtas are the basic ingredients of this creation, you are inherently also present throughout this creation). You are present in the form of the primordial cosmic egg from which the whole cosmos took shape and finally emerged and evolved into its present form. Nothing remains if you are removed from the cosmos. The Vedas are also one of your forms. You are the primary, most ancient and primordial entity. I most reverentially bow before you and your stupendously marvelous and magnificent form (32).

स्वतेजसा पूरितिलोकभेदं नमामि रूपं रविमण्डलस्थम्।
सहस्रमूर्द्धानमनन्तशक्तिं सहस्रबाहुं पुरुषं पुराणम्।
शयानमन्तः सलिले तवैव नारायणाख्यं प्रणतोऽस्मिरूपम्।। 33।।

svatejasā pūritilokabhedaṃ namāmi rūpaṃ ravimaṇḍalastham /
sahasramūrddhānamanantaśaktiṃ sahasrabāhuṃ puruṣaṃ purāṇam /
śayānamantaḥ salile tavaiva nārāyaṇākhyaṃ praṇato'smirūpam //

You are self illuminated. You fill the world completely form all sides without any discrimination or distinguishing. [In other words, the glorious light and brilliance emanating from you pervades the entire world, symbolically providing it with the glow which dispels the darkness of ignorance). Your radiant form is symbolic of the splendours Sun present in the solar system. You have thousands of heads and are possessed of immeasurable strength, powers and potential. You have thousands of arms, and you are the ancient Puruṣa, the primeval Male. You sleep or recline on the water in the form of Nārāyaṇa (here referring to Viṣṇu who reclines on a bed made of coiled legendary Śeṣanātha floating on the surface of the celestial ocean of milk called the Kṣīra Sāgara). I prostrate myself and reverentially bow before you and your astoundingly marvelous form (33).

दंष्ट्राकरालं त्रिदशाभिवन्द्यं युगान्तकालानलकल्परूपम्।
अशेषभूताण्ड विनाशहेतुं नमामि रूपं तव कालसंज्ञम्।। 34।।
daṃṣṭrākarālaṃ tridaśābhivandyaṃ yugāntakālānalakalparūpam /
aśeṣabhūtāṇḍa vināśahetuṃ namāmi rūpaṃ tava kālasaṃjñam //

Your ferocious and terrible form as Mahākālī has fierce and formidable as well as strong and powerful jaws with a row of sharp, pointed teeth. You are honoured, worshipped, revered and adored in all the three periods of time—the past, the present and the future times, as well as the three phases of life, such as the childhood, the adulthood and old age. Your fierce and formidable form reminds one of the ferocious fire burning during the dooms day. You have no remainder in your wake (i.e. after you, there is nothing left behind). You are that fearful and terrifying force of creation called death, destruction and annihilation which causes even the primordial cosmic egg to come to decay and destruction without leaving any trace, i.e. you can even terminate this creation even before it has been born; you can abort the whole process without leaving a single sign of its presence anytime you want; you can wipe out everything if you so wish, leaving nothing behind as a remainder or trace. I bow before such a formidable, horrifying and awe inspiring grand form of yours (34).

फणासहस्त्रेण विराजमानं भुवस्तलेऽधिष्ठितमप्रमेयम्।
अशेषभारोद्वहने समर्थं नमामि ते रूपनमन्तसंज्ञम्।। 35।।
phaṇāsahasreṇa virājamānaṃ bhuvastale'dhiṣṭhitamaprameyam /
aśeṣabhārodvahane samarthaṃ namāmi te rūpanamantasaṃjñam //

You are present as the patron deity of the subterranean world in the form of the legendary thousand hooded serpent (dragon or python) known as Śeṣa. You are limitless, boundless, endless, measureless and without any parameters, hence you are honoured by the epithet of Aprameya. As the ancient Śeṣanātha who has no end himself (i.e. who is eternal), you have the ability and competence to bear the burden of the earth and the world. [That is, since Śeṣanātha is also a manifestation of you divine powers and glories which enable it to bear the burden of the earth and the world, you too can do the same.] Your form is symbolic of that legendary Śeṣanātha who is also known by the term 'Ananta', which literally means the one who has no end. One bows before such a glorious form of yours (35)

अव्याहतैश्वर्यमयुग्मनेत्रं ब्रह्मात्मतानन्दरसंज्ञमेकम्।
युगान्तरशेषं दिवि नृत्यमानं तोऽस्मि रूपं तव रुद्रसंज्ञम्।। 36।।
avyāhataiśvaryamayugmanetraṃ brahmātmatānandarasaṃjñamekam /
yugāntaraśeṣaṃ divi nṛtyamānaṃ to'smi rūpaṃ tava rudrasaṃjñam //

Your virtues such as fame, majesty, glory, magnificence, nobility and radiance, collectively known as your Aiśvarya, are without any hindrances or obstacles, i.e. they have nothing to oppose them or stand in their way; they are perfect, immaculate, in their prime and without any doubts to their veracity and authenticity (Avyāhata). You have two types of eyes—one type is the gross eyes through which you see the physical world and the other eye is the eye of wisdom and enlightenment. You are engrossed or submerged in the supreme bliss obtained by self realisation of Brahma. In the heaven, you dance angrily in your fierce form like the dance done by Rudra at the time of dooms day or at the end of a Yuga or an era. [This dance is known as 'Tāṇḍava' in ancient texts.] Oh Goddess! I reverentially bow before such a magnificent and stunning form of yours (36).

प्रहीणशोकं विमलं पवित्रं सुरासुरैरर्चितपादयुग्मम्।
सुकोमलं देवि! विशालशुभ्रं नमामि ते रूपमिदं नमामि।। 37।।

prahīṇaśokaṃ vimalaṃ pavitraṃ surāsurairarcitapādayugmam /
sukomalaṃ devi ! viśālaśubhraṃ namāmi te rūpamidaṃ namāmi //

You are without any sorrows, grief, agonies and distresses (i.e. these negative traits keep far away from you). You are pious, clear, uncorrupt, untarnished, untainted, pristine pure, spotless, immaculate, beautiful, attractive and charming. Your twin august, divine and holy lotus-like feet are worshipped, honoured and adored by both the Gods as well as the non-Gods. You are delicate, tender and gentle. You have an auspicious form which is macrocosmic, all-pervading, all-encompassing and colossus (besides being subtle and sublime). Oh Goddess! I most reverentially bow repeatedly before such a glorious and marvelous form of yours' (37).

एतावदुक्त्वा वचनं रघुराजकुलोद्वहः। सम्प्रेक्षमाणो वैदेहीं प्रांजलिः पार्श्वतोऽभवत्।।38।।

etāvaduktvā vacanaṃ raghurājakulodvahaḥ /
samprekṣamāṇo vaidehīṃ prāṃjaliḥ pārśvato'bhavat //

The king of the Raghu's clan (Śrī Rāma) said this prayer in honour of the great Goddess. Then he stood humbly with joined hands by the side of Vaidehī (i.e. the daughter of king Videha or king Janaka; here referring to Sītā) (38).

[Note :—This verse shows that Sītā has reverted back to her original form from her ferocious form as Mahākālī that she had assumed to kill the 1000-headed Rāvaṇa.]

अथ सा तस्य वचनं निशम्य जगतीपतेः। सस्मितं प्राह भर्तारं श्रृणुष्वैकं वचो मम।।। 39।।

atha sā tasya vacanaṃ niśamya jagatīpateḥ /
sasmitaṃ prāha bhartāraṃ śṛṇuṣvaikaṃ vaco mama //

When Sītā heard his words, she smiled very pleasantly and graciously, and said to Śrī Rāma, 'Listen to what I have to say—(39).

गृहीतं यन्मया रूपं रावणस्य वधाय हि। तेन रूपेण राजेन्द्र वसामि मानसोत्तरे।।40।।

gṛhītaṃ yanmayā rūpaṃ rāvaṇasya vadhāya hi /
tena rūpeṇa rājendra vasāmi mānasottare //

Oh Rajendra (emperor—i.e. Śrī Rāma)! This ferocious, formidable, horrifying and awe inspiring form that I had assumed to slay Rāvaṇa, I shall stay to the north of Mānasa with this form (40).

[Note :—The word Mānasa means that which pertains to the mind and heart; it refers to the various thoughts and emotions appearing in the mind and the heart. The word Uttara means 'north' as well as 'something that is excellent, best, upwardly mobile, the posterior side of anything, subsequent, after, superior to, a response, an answer, as a consequence'. Hence, the implied meaning of the phrase Mānasottara is 'I am that exalted and supreme power, that stupendous force which reminds the world that if evil forces do not mend themselves on their own, if righteousness and virtues cannot be restored by trying to counter unrighteousness, inauspiciousness, un-holiness, perversion and un-virtuousness by conventional methods—as attempted by Śrī Rāma when he tried to subdue Rāvaṇa by the conventional method of warfare—then I (the supreme Goddess) am there to tackle them even by unconventional methods. I will get rid of all the evils in this world, represented by the demons, by hook or by crook. So let them beware !'

It also means that the supreme Goddess will live on the northern side of the Mānasasarovara Lake, on Mt. Kailāśa, which is located to the north of this lake. This mountain is the mythological abode of Lord Śiva and Pārvatī. Hence the goddess means to say that she will go back to Mt. Kailāśa and stay there till the time she is needed to come back and help her devotees. In other words, she tells Śrī Rāma that she is always accessible to him. She is leaving behind her manifestation Sītā to always accompany him, but should he feel the need of the divine Goddess and her stupendous powers as displayed by her in the battlefield, he need not worry, because Sītā is always with him and he just needs to tell her and she will do the job for him. This is made clear by the Goddess in the following verse.]

प्रकृत्या नीलरूपस्त्वं लोहितो रावणार्दितः। नीललोहितरूपेण त्वया सहवसाम्यहम्।।41।।

prakṛtyā nīlarūpastvaṃ lohito rāvaṇārditaḥ /
nīlalohitarūpeṇa tvayā sahavasāmyaham //

You (Śrī Rāma) have a natural light blue complexion (resembling the shade of the sky, because you are a manifestation of the Virāṭ Puruṣa who pervades in the whole sky). Being wounded in the fierce battle with Rāvaṇa, you have acquired a blood red colour of your complexion (because your body is drenched with blood). Hence, I shall assume a complexion which is of a composite shade consisting of blue and red colours (i.e. violet) and live with you (41).

[Note :—That is why Śrī Rāma is depicted in the Purāṇas and mythology as having a dark complexioned skin. It is a composite colour made from the colour of the sky (blue), and the colour of blood (red), a combination which creates the violet hue.]

गृहाण च वरं राम! मत्तो यदभिकांक्षितम्। तच्छ्रुत्वा राघवो वीरः प्रतिश्रुत्य गिरौ स्थितिम्।।42।।

gṛhāṇa ca varaṃ rāma! matto yadabhikāṃkṣitam/
tacchrutvā rāghavo vīraḥ pratiśrutya girau sthitim//

Oh Śrī Rāma! Ask any boon or blessing that you wish to have, and I shall give it to you'. When the brave Rāghava (Śrī Rāma) heard these magnanimous and benevolent words of the Goddess, he accepted them (i.e. he accepted the Goddess' request to ask for a boon and accept her as Sītā living side by side with him) (42).

भारद्वाजांशभागेन ययाचे परमेश्वरीम्। देवि! सीते! महाभागे! दर्शितं रूपमैश्वरम्।।43।।

bhāradvājāṃśabhāgena yayāce parameśvarīm/
devi! sīte! mahābhāge! darśitaṃ rūpamaiśvaram//

[Sage Vālmīki said—] 'Oh Bhāradvāja! Śrī Rāma asked his counterpart (i.e. Sītā), 'Oh the supreme Goddess ! Oh the Goddess Sītā, the fortunate one. You have shown me your supreme, transcendental, divine, holy and sublime form as the Lord of all creation (43).

हृदयान्नापगच्छेत्तदिति मे दीयतां वरः। भ्रातरौ मम कल्याणि! वानराः सविभीषणाः।।44।।
सेनान्यो मम वैदेहि अयोध्यायोधमुख्यकाः। पुनस्ते संगताः सन्तु मया रावणतर्जिताः।।45।।

hṛdayānnāpagacchettaditi me dīyatāṃ varaḥ/
bhrātarau mama kalyāṇi! vānarāḥ savibhīṣaṇāḥ//
senānyo mama vaidehi ayodhyāyodhamukhyakāḥ/
punaste saṃgatāḥ santu mayā rāvaṇatarjitāḥ//

Let this divine and magnificent, most remarkable and stupendously marvelous form of yours never leave my heart. Please give me this boon; please bless me! Oh the auspicious one! My brothers, the monkeys (the army of Sugrīva) along with Vibhīṣaṇa (and his demon companions of Laṅkā) (44) and my soldiers and other chieftains and commanders of the army of Ayodhyā who have been mortally wounded by Rāvaṇa, oh Vaidehī (Sītā), let me meet all of them once again' (45). [44-45]

[Note :—It should be noted here that majority of Śrī Rāma's army was blown away by the Vāyavyāstra shot by Rāvaṇa during the battle preceding his direct confrontation with Śrī Rāma. Prior to that, when the demon army had clashed with Śrī Rāma's army, thousands of Śrī Rāma's soldiers were wounded. So the Lord here asks the Goddess to revive them back to life. He also means to say that those who are not visible on the battlefield, about whom he has no information as to where they have gone, let circumstances become favourable so that he can meet them once again.]

एतस्मिन्नन्तरे चाभूदाकाशे दुन्दुभिस्वनः। पपात पुष्पवृष्टिश्च रामसीतोपरि द्विज।।46।।
etasminnantare cābhūdākāśe dundubhisvanaḥ /
papāta puṣpavṛṣṭiśca rāmasītopari dvija //

Oh Brāhmin (i.e. Bhāradvāja)! Just at that time, there was a celebratory noise of the beating of the kettle drums in the sky. Flowers rained down upon Śrī Rāma and Sītā from the heavens as the Gods celebrated the occasion (46).

प्रहस्य सीता पुनराह रामं तथेपि रामोऽपि विरिंचिमुख्यान्।
स तान्विसृज्य प्रतिगृह्य सीतां गन्तुं स्वकं देशमसावियेष।। 47।।
prahasya sītā punarāha rāmaṃ tathepi rāmo'pi viriṃcimukhyān /
sa tānvisṛjya pratigṛhya sītāṃ gantuṃ svakaṃ deśamasāviyeṣa //

Sītā said most cheerfully, with an exhilarant heart, to Śrī Rāma, 'Let it be so!' Then Śrī Rāma bid farewell to Brahmā and other Gods who were watching the proceedings from the sky, and made preparations to go back to his own country (Ayodhyā) along with Sītā (47).

Thus ends Canto 26 of the ancient epic called Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa written by sage Vālmīki describing Śrī Rāma's prayer to Sītā as the supreme Goddess, her reverting back from her ferocious form as Mahākālī to her original calm, pleasant, graceful, dignified and auspicious form, her blessing Śrī Rāma, the celebration of the Gods, and the couple's preparations to go back to Ayodhyā.

* * *

Canto 27

Epilogue

Śrī Rāma's arrival at Ayodhyā, his coronation; conclusion of Rāmāyaṇa; the benefits of hearing, reading, preaching and discussing it; the genesis of the story and its summary

This is the last and concluding canto of this Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa. It tells about Śrī Rāma's arrival back into this city of Ayodhyā, his narration of the evens at Puṣkara, such as the slaying of Rāvaṇa, to his kith and kin, and then biding good bye to the monkeys and demons lead by Sugrīva and Vibhīṣaṇa respectively. The benefits and rewards of reading, hearing, discussing and preaching this version of Śrī Rāma's divine story as described along with its genesis and how it was revealed in this world, are then described. Finally, in 8 verses, from verse nos. 23 till 30, the entire story has been outlined in brief.

Verse no. 19 and 23 tells us that this version of Rāmāyaṇa, called the Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa, is also known by the name of 'Adbhutottara Kāṇḍam'. I have explained the implications of this phrase as a note to verse no. 19.

रामस्तु पुष्करारूढः सीतामालिंग्य बाहुना। अयोध्यामगमद्वीरः काकुत्स्थकुलनन्दनः ।।1।।

rāmastu puṣkarārūḍhaḥ sītāmāliṃgya bāhunā /
ayodhyāmagamadvīraḥ kākutsthakulanandanaḥ //

Śrī Rāma got on the Puṣpaka plane along with Sītā and embraced her affectionately. The son of the Kākustha clan (Śrī Rāma) then headed home to Ayodhyā (1).

रथतेमिस्वनं श्रुत्वा रामदर्शनलालसाः। भ्रातरो भरताद्यास्ते योधमुख्याश्च ते तथा।।2।।
राममागतमाज्ञाय ससीतं सऋषिवृजम्। प्रणेमुः सहसागत्य आनन्दाश्रुकणाकुलाः।।3।।

rathatemisvanaṃ śrutvā rāmadarśanalālasāḥ /
bhrātaro bharatādyāste yodhamukhyāśca te tathā //
rāmamāgatamājñāya sasītaṃ sarṣivṛjam /
praṇemuḥ sahasāgatya ānandāśrukaṇākulāḥ //

Hearing the sound of the Puṣpaka plane in the sky over Ayodhyā, Bharata and other brothers accompanied by the chief warriors who were all anxious and eager to have a divine glimpse of their Lord Śrī Rāma (2) realised that he has come along with Sītā and other sages. They eagerly and spontaneously rushed forward to meet them with tears of joy welling up in their eyes. They bowed most reverentially and affectionately before Śrī Rāma (3). [2-3]

[Note :—After Rāvaṇa had flung away the entire army of Śrī Rāma as described in canto 21, verse no. 6-7, the only people remaining behind were the various sages and seers who had either accompanied Śrī Rāma from Ayodhyā or were present in the sky alongside the Gods to witness the war. This is also evident from verse nos. 12 and 14 of canto 21, verse nos. 50 of canto 22, and verse nos. 1-5 of canto 23.]

वानरान् रक्षसान्सर्वानानय्य स्वपुरं हि सः। सर्वं तत्कथायामास रामः कमललोचनः।।4।।

vānarān rakṣasānsarvānānayya svapuraṃ hi saḥ /
sarvaṃ tatkathāyāmāsa rāmaḥ kamalalocanaḥ //

Śrī Rāma brought along all the monkeys and demons (the army's of Sugrīva and Vibhīṣaṇa respectively) inside his royal place and described to them the entire episode of how Rāvaṇa was killed (4).

[Note :—We must note here that the monkeys of Sugrīva and the demons of Vibhīṣaṇa were not present in the battlefield at Puṣkara during the final moments of Rāvaṇa's death and the events that sequentially followed his killing, because Rāvaṇa had used the weapon known as 'Vāyavyāstra' and had flung all of them away from the battlefield in one powerful blast of air, making them land in Ayodhyā, or get scattered to different places—see canto 21, verse no. 6-7.]

तच्छ्रुत्वा विस्मिताः सर्वे साधुसाध्विति वादिनः। सीतां तत्त्वेन विज्ञाय रामं च मधुसूदनम्।।5।।
तदेवं चिन्तयन्तस्ते स्वं स्वं स्थानं ययुर्मुदा। विसृष्टा रामभद्रेण सान्त्वपूर्वं महात्मना।।6।।

tacchrutvā vismitāḥ sarve sādhusādhviti vādinaḥ /
sītāṃ tattvena vijñāya rāmaṃ ca madhusūdanam //
tadevaṃ cintayantaste svaṃ svaṃ sthānaṃ yayurmudā /
visṛṣṭā rāmabhadreṇa sāntvapūrvaṃ mahātmanā //

Hearing the details, they were amazed and hailed the victory, paying great tributes to the heroic deeds of Śrī Rāma. Realising the essential divine form of Sītā as the divine Goddess and that of Śrī Rāma as Madhusūdana (and epithet for Viṣṇu) (5), they pondered over this great mystery and discussed about it amongst themselves as they made their way back to their respective homes. The gentleman Śrī Rāma dismissed or bid farewell to those great souls called Mahātma with great respect and honour (6). [5-6]

ऋषयश्चाभिनन्द्यैनं ससीतं रघुनन्दनम्। आशीर्भिर्वर्धयामासुर्ययुश्चापि यथागतम्।।7।।

ṛṣayaścābhinandyainaṃ sasītaṃ raghunandanam /
āśīrbhirvardhayāmāsuryayuścāpi yathāgatam //

The sages and seers honoured and blessed Raghunandana (literally the son of the Raghu's clan; here meaning Śrī Rāma) along with Sītā with enhanced auspiciousness, fame, glory and welfare. Then they also went their way (7).

रामोऽपि सीतया सार्द्धं भ्रातृभिश्च महात्मभिः। चक्रे निष्कण्टकां पृथ्वीं देवानां च महद्धितम्।। 8।।

rāmo'pi sītayā sārddhaṃ bhrātṛbhiśca mahātmabhiḥ /
cakre niṣkaṇṭakāṃ pṛthvīṃ devānāṃ ca mahaddhitam //

Śrī Rāma, helped by Sītā and his noble and virtuous great brothers, made the earth free from any 'thorns' in the form of evil demons, for the benefit of the Gods and the entire creation. [That is, after becoming king Emperor, Śrī Rāma ensured that no evil forces remained on the earth in his realm. He made sure that there was all round peace and tranquility everywhere, and all the tormenting forces for which the word 'thorn' has been used in the text were removed and thrown away.] (8)

यज्ञान् बहुविधांश्चक्रे सरयूतीर उत्तमे। दशवर्षसहस्राणि दशवर्षशतानि च।
किंचिदभ्यधिकं चैव रामो राज्यमकारयत्।। 9।।

yajñān bahuvidhāṃścakre sarayūtīra uttame /
daśavarṣasahasrāṇi daśavarṣaśatāni ca /
kiṃcidabhyadhikaṃ caiva rāmo rājyamakārayat //

He performed numerous religious sacrifices on the banks of the river Saryu. In this way, Śrī Rāma ruled for a little more than 11,000 years (9).

देवकिन्नरगन्धर्वा विद्याधरमहोरगाः। रामं नमन्ति सततं गुणारामं रमापतिम्।।10।।

devakinnaragandharvā vidyādharamahoragāḥ /
rāmaṃ namanti satataṃ guṇārāmaṃ ramāpatim //

The Gods, Kinnaras (semi-Gods who have heads like that of a horse; they are celestial singers and dancers), Gandharvas (a type of semi-God who is a celestial musician), Vidyādharas (another type of semi-God who is considered senior and more wise than the Gandharvas and Kinnaras) and great legendary serpents always bowed before Śrī Rāma to pay their respects to him who was a treasury of all good virtues and auspiciousness (10).

एतत्ते कथितं भद्रे भारद्वाज महामते। तेषु किंचिदिहाश्चर्यमुक्तं रामकथाश्रयम्।। 11।।

etatte kathitaṃ bhadre bhāradvāja mahāmate /
teṣu kiṃcidihāścaryamuktaṃ rāmakathāśrayam //

Oh wise and gentleman Bhāradvāja! I have described all this for your sake. Śrī Rāma's stories, describing his marvelous deeds, are numerous in number. Out of them, I have described only a selected version, a part of the myriad versions, which seemed most astonishing, most fascinating, most mysterious and strange to me (11).

सर्वं न वक्तुमिच्छामि पुररुक्तिभयाद्द्विज। ब्रह्मणा गोपितं तच्च अतोऽपि न तदुक्तवान्।। 12।।

sarvaṃ na vaktumicchāmi puraruktibhayāddvija /
brahmaṇā gopitaṃ tacca ato'pi na taduktavān //

For the fear of repetition, I am not able to tell or describe everything in detail. Brahmā, the creator, had kept it concealed as a secret (in his heart), that is why I hadn't described it to you earlier (12).

[Note :—This verse explains why Vālmīki has skipped all the major events normally associated with any version of Rāmāyaṇa and has concentrated instead only on those points which were hitherto untold by anyone in any of the versions in this world. I have emphasised this point in the preface also.]

अद्भुतोत्तरकाण्डे तत्कथितं वेदसम्मितम्। शृणोत्यधीते यश्चैतत्स ब्रह्म परमाप्नुयात्।।13।।

adbhutottarakāṇḍe tatkathitaṃ vedasammitam /
śṛṇotyadhīte yaścaitatsa brahma paramāpnuyāt //

In this way, this story which is at once most astounding and amazing as well as is in accordance with the Vedas has been described in these cantos. Those who read it or hear it are able to attain the supreme abode of the transcendental Brahma (13).

श्लोकमेकं तदर्धं वा शृणुयाद्यच्च मानवः। प्रातर्मध्याह्नयोगे वा स याति परमां गतिम्।।14।।

ślokamekaṃ tadardhaṃ vā śṛṇuyādyacca mānavaḥ /
prātarmadhyāhnayoge vā sa yāti paramāṃ gatim //

Those people who hear one or more of its Ślokas (verses or hymns) get emancipation and salvation which is similar to the one achieved by an ascetic who does severe meditation (Yoga) in the morning and at noon (14).

पंचविंशतिसाहस्त्रं रामायणमधीत्य यत्। फलमाप्नोति पुरुषस्तदस्य श्लोकमात्रतः।।15।।

paṃcaviṃśatisāhasraṃ rāmāyaṇamadhītya yat /
phalamāpnoti puruṣastadasya ślokamātrataḥ //

The benefit or reward that is received by reading 25,000 Rāmāyaṇas is got by merely by reading one verse of this Rāmāyaṇa (15).

[Note :—This is obviously an exaggeration and a hyperbole. The more practical meaning is that the rewards one gets by reading this Rāmāyaṇa once is equivalent to reading all the other versions of the epic story. This is just to stress its importance. See also verse no. 17 and 18 in this context.]

न श्रुतं नाप्यधीतं वा येना श्रुतमिदं द्विज। स गर्भान्निःसृतो नैव यथा भ्रूणस्तथैव सः ।।16।।

na śrutaṃ nāpyadhītaṃ vā yenā śrutamidaṃ dvija /
sa garbhānniḥsṛto naiva yathā bhrūṇastathaiva saḥ //

Those who have neither had the good fortune of hearing it or reading it are as good as the embryo which has not come out of the womb. [That is, if a child does not take birth and the embryo dies while still inside the mother's womb, it will be of no use. Similarly, a person who has been born in this world and who does not hear this Rāmāyaṇa even once in this life time, his being alive is useless, and his life is said to be fruitless.] (16)

रामायणमिदं श्रुत्वा न मातुर्जठरे विशेत्। वेदाश्चत्वार एकत्र तुलया चेदमेकतः ।।17।।
विधात्रा तुलितं शास्त्रं सर्वदेवाग्रतो द्विज। इदं तु सर्ववेदेभ्यो गौरवादतिरिच्यते ।।18।।

rāmāyaṇamidaṃ śrutvā na māturjaṭhare viśet /
vedāścatvāra ekatra tulayā cedamekataḥ //
vidhātrā tulitaṃ śāstraṃ sarvadevāgrato dvija /
idaṃ tu sarvavedebhyo gauravādatiricyate //

One has not to enter the womb of a mother again after hearing this Rāmāyaṇa (i.e. a person who reads or hears this Rāmāyaṇa is spared from the torments associated with taking birth again in this world and suffering from the horrors of lying in the dark, dingy and filthy womb of the mother). When the creator and the maker of destiny, i.e. Lord Brahmā who is called Vidhātrā because of his this function, kept this Rāmāyaṇa on one side of the scale and weighed it against all the four Vedas in front of the Gods who acted as witness, he found the former's 'Gaurava' or its glory, prestige, eminence, honour, grandeur, magnificence, impact, importance and significance, stateliness and majesty, powers, potent and authority, to be far greater than that of all the four Vedas put together. [That is, the balance tilted in the favour of this Rāmāyaṇa when it was weighed against the Vedas.] (17-18)

शक्राय स्वर्णदीतीरे पुरा पृष्ठोऽहमब्रुवम्। तदेव तव चाख्यातमद्भुतोत्तरकाण्डकम् ।।19।।

śakrāya svarṇadītīre purā pṛṣṭho'hamabruvam /
tadeva tava cākhyātamadbhutottarakāṇḍakam //

I had first described this Rāmāyaṇa to Indra, and at his request on the banks of the golden river. It is the same 'Adbhutottara Kāṇḍam' that I have narrated to you (as the present Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa) (19).

[Note :—The phrase 'Adbhutottara Kāṇḍam' has three parts—(a) Adbhuta, (b) Uttarottara, and (c) Kāṇḍa. The first word 'Adbhuta' means strange, mysterious, fantastic, fascinating, unprecedented, marvelous, remarkable, magnificent, incredulous, incredible and stupendous. The word 'Uttara' means answer, a reply, something which is consequential or a result of some previous deed, later, most exalted and superior. The second word 'Uttarottara' therefore means something that is better than Uttara. Here it means the most excellent answer to the question asked by a disciple. It also means the narration of an event that is most excellent, super and magnificent, the like of which has not happened before. And the last word 'Kāṇḍam' means an act, a deed, an event, an episode, a happening or an action; in context of a book, a chapter.

Hence, this Rāmāyaṇa depicts or describes the hitherto unknown but most excellent and magnificently remarkable yet incredulous and incredible secrets and mysterious events and happening that took place in the later part of Śrī Rāma's life after he had killed the Rāvaṇa of Laṅkā. These events or episodes are revealed only when someone showed his earnest desire to learn about them or when he asked a question regarding those events, not before. They were disclosed as an answer (Uttara—) to the query. In the present case, it was Indra who had asked the question for the purpose of its first disclosure as 'Adbhutottara Kāṇḍam', and for the purpose of this book called Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa, the questioner was sage Bhāradvāja who was the second questioner.]

रामायणं महारत्नं ब्रह्महृत्क्षीरधावभूत्। नारदान्तः समासाद्य क्रमान्मम हृदि स्थितम्।।20।।

rāmāyaṇaṃ mahāratnaṃ brahmahṛtkṣīradhāvabhūt /
nāradāntaḥ samāsādya kramānmama hṛdi sthitam //

This Rāmāyaṇa is like a gem which was present in the ocean of milk called Kṣīra Sāgara represented by Brahmā's heart. Then it was transferred to the bosom or heart of Nārada, the celestial sage, and from there it came to my heart. [That is, Brahmā first narrated this story to Nārada, who in turn told Vālmīki about it. Then Vālmīki described it to Indra for the benefit of Gods, and then later on to Bhāradvāja for the benefit of humans.] (20)

तत्सर्वं ब्रह्मणो लोके निःशेषमवतिष्ठते। किंचिदुर्व्यां च पाताले त्रिदिवे शक्रसन्निधौ।।21।।

tatsarvaṃ brahmaṇo loke niḥśeṣamavatiṣṭhate /
kiṃcidurvyāṃ ca pātāle tridive śakrasannidhau //

The entire story of the divine deeds and events as described in Rāmāyaṇa are located or stored in Brahma-Loka (the abode of Brahmā, the patriarch of creation). Some of the versions are available on earth and in the subterranean or nether world, and some are with Indra (the king of Gods) in the heaven (21).

विरंचिर्नारदोऽहं च त्रय एवास्य पारगाः। चतुर्थो नोपपद्यते बुद्ध्वेदं सुस्थिरो भव।।22।।

viraṃcirnārado'haṃ ca traya evāsya pāragāḥ /
caturtho nopapadyate buddhvedaṃ susthiro bhava //

Brahmā, Nārada and me (Vālmīki)—we are the only three who know it thoroughly. Be certain that there is no fourth person with this great reach and the requisite depth of knowledge that we three have (22).

यदुक्तमद्भुते काण्डे पुनस्ते कथयाम्यहम्। श्रीरामजन्मवृत्तान्तः श्रीमतीचरितं महत्।। 23।।

yaduktamadbhute kāṇḍe punaste kathayāmyaham /
śrīrāmajanmavṛttāntaḥ śrīmatīcaritaṃ mahat //

Whatever has been said and described in this Rāmāyaṇa known as 'Adbhutottara Kāṇḍam' (see note to verse no. 19 above) is being briefly listed for your convenience now by me. Listen carefully—Śrī Rāma's birth, the great episode pertaining to Śrīmatī, (23),

दण्डकारण्यकस्थानां शोणितेन महात्मनाम्। नारदस्य च शापेन लक्ष्म्याश्चैवापराधतः।।24।।
मन्दोदरीगर्भनिष्ठा वैदेही जन्म चोक्तवान्। रामस्य विश्वरूपं च भार्गवेण च वीक्षितम्।।25।।

daṇḍakāraṇyakasthānāṃ śoṇitena mahātmanām /
nāradasya ca śāpena lakṣmyāścaivāparādhataḥ //
mandodarīgarbhaniṣṭhā vaidehī janma coktavān /
rāmasya viśvarūpaṃ ca bhārgaveṇa ca vīkṣitam //

The episode pertaining to 10-headed Rāvaṇa's extracting blood from the sages and seers living in the Daṇḍakāraṇya forest; the curse of sage Nārada and the demeanours of Lakṣmī (24) that led to the birth of Sītā as Vaidehī from the womb of Mandodarī (the wife of 10-headed Rāvaṇa); Śrī Rāma showing Bhārgava (sage Paraśurāma) his macrocosmic, all-encompassing colossus form as Virāṭ Puruṣa, (25). [24-25]

ऋष्यमूके हनुमता चतुर्बाहूरघूत्तमः। दृष्टो भिक्षुस्वरूपेण सुग्रीवसख्यमुक्तवान्।।26।।

ṛṣyamūke hanumatā caturbāhūraghūttamaḥ /
dṛṣṭo bhikṣusvarūpeṇa sugrīvasakhyamuktavān //

Near Mt. Ṛṣyamūka, the most exalted Rāghava (Śrī Rāma) showed his 4-armed divine form (as Viṣṇu, the sustainer and the 2 of the Trinity Gods) to Hanumāna when the latter appeared before him disguised as a mendicant or monk to find out who Śrī Rāma was and why he had come. Then a bond of friendship was made with Sugrīva (the king of monkeys) (26).

लक्ष्मणांगजतापेन शोषणं वारिधेः पुनः। प्राप्तराज्यस्य रामस्य मुनीनां सन्निधौ तथा।।27।।
सीतायाः कथनं श्रुत्वा सहस्रास्यस्य रक्षसः। मानसोत्तरशैलेन्द्रे स्थितिं ज्ञात्वा रघुद्वहः।।28।।

lakṣmaṇāṃgajatāpena śoṣaṇaṃ vāridheḥ punaḥ /
prāptarājyasya rāmasya munīnāṃ sannidhau tathā //
sītāyāḥ kathanaṃ śrutvā sahasrāsyasya rakṣasaḥ /
mānasottaraśailendre sthitiṃ jñātvā raghudvahaḥ //

The ocean was tormented by the immense heat produced from the body of Lakṣmaṇa (when he had jumped in it to dry the water so that Śrī Rāma's army could cross the ocean). Śrī Rāma got back to Ayodhyā (after conquering Laṅkā and slaying the 10-heded Rāvaṇa) and regained his kingdom and crown. Then he heard the story of the 1000-headed Rāvaṇa of Puṣkara, who was the elder brother of the 10-headed Rāvaṇa, from Sītā in the presence of the assembled sages and seers who had come to praise him for his victory in Laṅkā. Śrī Rāma came to know about the place where this Rāvaṇa lived—it was on a mountain range to the north of Mānasa, in the city of Puṣkara (27-28).

जगाम पुष्करद्वीपं भ्रातृभिः सह वानरैः। सीताया ऐश्वरं रूपं रावणस्य वधस्तथा।।29।।

jagāma puṣkaradvīpaṃ bhrātṛbhiḥ saha vānaraiḥ /
sītāyā aiśvaraṃ rūpaṃ rāvaṇasya vadhastathā //

Śrī Rāma then goes on a mission to Puṣkara island (or a small continent) accompanied by his brothers and the monkey army of Sugrīva (to conquer and kill this 1000-headed Rāvaṇa). Sītā also accompanies him. She shows her divine form as the great Goddess of the world (i.e. Goddess Mahākālī) and then she slays that 1000-headed Rāvaṇa (after Śrī Rāma had failed to subdue him and lay wounded in the battlefield) (29).

अयोध्यागमनं रामस्यैष वृत्तान्तसंग्रहः। वृत्तान्तसंग्रहं चापि पाठित्वा रामभक्तिमान्।
जायते मुनिशार्दूल नात्र कार्या विचारणा।।30।।

ayodhyāgamanaṃ rāmasyaiṣa vṛttāntasaṃgrahaḥ /
vṛttāntasaṃgrahaṃ cāpi pāṭhitvā rāmabhaktimān /
jāyate muniśārdūla nātra kāryā vicāraṇā //

Then Śrī Rāma returns to Ayodhyā. This narration is a collection of all these major events or episodes outlined above. A person is inspired and drenched and soaked with devotion for Śrī Rāma when or if he reads this compendium. Oh the lion amongst sages (i.e. oh the one who is the senior most and the most exalted amongst the sages and seers—here referring to sage Bhāradvāja). There is no doubt about it (30).

पठेच्च यो रामचरित्र मेतत्पुनाति पापात्सुकृतं लभेत।
तीर्थाभिषेकं समरे जयं च स सर्वयज्ञस्य महत्फलं च।।31।।

paṭhecca yo rāmacaritra metatpunāti pāpātsukṛtaṃ labheta /
tīrthābhiṣekaṃ samare jayaṃ ca sa sarvayajñasya mahatphalaṃ ca //

Anyone who reads this Rāmāyaṇa called 'Rāma Caritra' (literally meaning the divine and glorious deeds done by Śrī Rāma in this world which depicts his divine character and great virtues) is liberated and delivered from sins and their effects. He gets auspiciousness and the reward of doing numerous virtuous, noble, auspicious and good deeds. He also gets the rewards or benefits of offering water or milk to deities at pilgrim sites, fame of getting victory in war, and the beneficial effect of doing all the religious rites and fire sacrifices as ordained by the scriptures (31).

भजेत यो राममचिन्त्यरूपमेकेन भावेन च भूमिपुत्रीम्।
एतत्सुपुण्यं शृणुयात्पठेद्वा भूयो भवेन्नो जठरे जनन्याः।।32।।

bhajeta yo rāmamacintyarūpamekena bhāvena ca bhūmiputrīm /
etatsupuṇyaṃ śṛṇuyātpaṭhedvā bhūyo bhavenno jaṭhare jananyāḥ //

A person who worships, adores, constantly contemplates and meditates upon, thinks about and concentrates his mind and heart on the form of Śrī Rāma as the divine, sublime, transcendental Supreme Being who is beyond the realm, reach and purview of thought, contemplation, comprehension and understating, does so by worshipping the 'daughter of the earth', who is Sītā herself and no one else. [That is, in order to worship Śrī Rāma, one has to worship Sītā as his divine consort. In other words, worshipping of Sītā is a path leading to the doorway of worshipping Śrī Rāma. Worship of Sītā as the divine Goddess is the first step of worshipping of the Lord God himself. Worshipping of Sītā is equivalent to worshiping Śrī Rāma, and vice versa.] A person who reads and hears this holy scripture does not have to come back and enter a mother's womb again, and therefore he gets the ultimate emancipation and salvation (which is known as Parama Pada wherein the devotee of the Lord finds his Lord and stays with him to serve his divine, holy and august feet forever) (32).

Thus ends Canto 27 of the ancient epic called Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa written by sage Vālmīki describing Śrī Rāma's return to Ayodhyā. It lists the different benefits got by hearing and reading this Rāmāyaṇa and describes the genesis of the story. It also summarises the major events in the story.

* * *

Appendix - 1

Sage Vālmīki—his Life and Works; A Pen Portrait

The venerable sage Vālmīki was the author of the twin epics 'Rāmāyaṇa' and 'Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa'. His dexterous handling of the epic story of Śrī Rāma, his astute eye for details and a sharp intellect, his profound wisdom and erudition, his ability to transcendent the boundaries of time and limitations of words, resulted in a repository of knowledge that weaved in its fine texture of the time-tested storytelling method the greatest of spiritual, metaphysical and theological maxims and axioms, the profoundest of noble ideas and virtues that epitomises the essence of the Vedas and all other scriptures taken together. In fact, as we shall see in this appendix, Vālmīki has even conceptualised 99th Sūkta (hymn) consisting of 12 verses or Ṛcās or Ślokas in the 10th division of the Ṛg Veda. Besides this, Vālmīki has also been known as the 24th 'Veda Vyāsa', or a scholarly preacher who has classified the Vedas, compiled the Upaniṣads and wrote the different Purāṇas. As a preacher and scholarly commentator of the Vedas, i.e. as Veda Vyāsa, he was known by the name of 'Ṛkṣa'. This fact is mentioned in Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Chapter 3, verse no. 11-21. Pertinent portions are discussed below in this appendix.

But first let us have a broad outline of the stories related to his lineage and birth, and how he came to me known as 'Vālmīki'.

He was **born** as a Brāhmin in the Gotra (lineage or family) of sage Aṅgirā. His earlier name was Ratnākara. There are many versions available about his early life before he became famed and renowned as the great sage by the name of Vālmīki. Some of the various versions about his early life in brief are as follows :—

(a) According to Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa by sage Veda Vyāsa (Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Veda Vyāsa of the current era of the 4-Yuga cycle), Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa, canto 6, verse nos. 65-87, the sage himself describes to Śrī Rāma, when the latter came to pay visit to the sage's hermitage at Citrakūṭa, about his early life. Vālmīki tells Śrī Rāma that he was born a Brāhmin and married a tribal women belonging to the Kirāta tribe who were forest dwelling mountain folks living on the eastern fringes of the Himālayas. From her he begot many sons. To maintain his family, he used to rob and kill travelers. Once he targeted and waylaid the celestial seven sages who decided to amend him. They asked the bandit Ratnākara to enquire from his family if they would share the result of accumulated sins that he has committing for their sake by waylaying and robbing innocent travelers. The family members told him that they wouldn't, for they were only interested in food and comfort that he could provide for them. Chastened and stunned, Ratnākara was so shocked that he immediately became extremely remorseful and contrite. He rushed back to the sages and fell at their feet, asking for forgiveness, seeking repentance and atonement for his evil deeds. As is the wont of pious saints, the sages discussed among themselves an easy method for his salvation, and that was to do 'Japa' (constant repetition of some holy word) of the 'Tāraka Mantra' (which is a liberation and deliverance providing divine word), i.e. the divine word 'Rāma'. But since Ratnākara was so horribly sinful and he couldn't pronounce the word straight, the sages advised him to repeat it incessantly backwards as 'Māra' which automatically transformed into 'Rāma' after the first utterance, because 'Māra' is a mirror image of the word 'Rāma' in Hindi. Ratnākara sat in deep meditation and his body was covered in an anthill called 'Vālmīka' in Sanskrit. When the sages returned to him after a long period of 1000 Yugas [1 Yuga = a very long period of time; approximately 12 years, but generally used to denote one phase of the 4 phase celestial cycle consisting of Sat, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali; at least 12 × 1000 = 12000 years], they woke him up, and regarding this new life of his as his symbolic second birth, they renamed Ratnākara as Vālmīki because the now-transformed man emerged from an anthill. [An English version of Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa has been published separately by this author.]

(b) Four different versions are available in Skanda Purāṇa. They are briefly summarised as follows :—(i) Skanda Purāṇa, Avanti Khaṇḍa (volume), section 5, Chapters 24-25 say that he was a Brāhmin named Sumati in the clan of sage Bhṛgu. His wife was named Kauśikī. They had a son named Agniśarma. Inspite of the best efforts of the father, the son would not study and not become educated in the scriptures as his father wanted him to be. Instead he remained a wayward fool. Once there was a famine and Sumati moved to the south of India with his family. There, Agniśarma joined a band of bandits. Then the story follows the same pattern as the one described in Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa, except that he was advised by sage Atri instead of the seven celestial sages to contemplate and meditate upon the Rāma Mantra, in a meditative process called 'Dhyāna Yoga'. Agniśarma remained in a trance-like state of Samādhi for third years, after which the seven sages came and renamed him as Vālmīki after the anthill which had formed over his unmoving body during his period of Samādhi. Then sage Vālmīki, who was earlier known as Agniśarma, went to a place called 'Kuśa' and meditated upon Lord Śiva who blessed him with the intellectual prowess as an erudite and scholarly poet, a wise seer and enlightened scholar, enabling him to compose the twin epics 'Rāmāyaṇa' and 'Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa'. It is because of Vālmīki's worship of Lord Śiva and acquiring the acumen and competency to describe the Rāmāyaṇa that the Śivaliṅgam (the symbol of Lord Śiva) at Avantikā is known as 'Vālmīkeśvara', literally meaning the lord of Vālmīki, a reference to Lord Śiva.

We must note that sage Atri advised Agniśarma to contemplate upon the Mahāmantra (the great divine word) which is 'Rāma', and repeat it incessantly with full concentration, which is called Dhyāna or meditation. Atri told him that it had the potential to destroy the greatest and gravest of sins. So Agniśarma sat under a tree and meditated so fixedly that an anthill was formed around his body.

तथेत्युक्तवाथ तान् प्राह अग्निं ध्यानं समाचर।
अनेन ध्यानयोगेन महामन्त्रजपेन च।।
अनेकदुस्तरात्युग्रपापकृज्जनघातकः ।
संस्थितो वृक्षमूले त्वं परां सिद्धिं गमिष्यसि।। 26-27।।

tathetyuktavātha tān prāha agniṃ dhyānaṃ samācara /
anena dhyānayogena mahāmantrajapena ca //
anekadustarātyugrapāpakṛjjanaghātakaḥ /
saṃsthito vṛkṣamūle tvaṃ parāṃ siddhiṃ gamiṣyasi //

(ii) Skanda Purāṇa, Vaiṣṇava Khaṇḍa, Chapter 18, verse no. 35-80 in the section dealing with the importance and significance of the month of 'Vaiśākha' (the second Hindu holy month, roughly April), the story of the three consecutive births of Vālmīki have been described. Briefly it is as follows—In ancient time, in the city of Śākala, in the Gotra (linage) called Śrīvatsa (who claimed to be descendants of Lord Viṣṇu, who is also known by this name), there was a learned Brāhmin named Stumb who was an expert in the Vedas. He was married to a faithful wife but fell in love with a low caste women called Gaṇikā. Once he suffered from fistula because he used to eat radish and drink buffalo milk together. All his wealth dried up in the treatment of this disease. That mistress of his (Gaṇikā) abandoned him in his bad times, leaving him to be served by his loyal and faithful wife. Once it so happened that sage Devala passed that way. The wife informed her husband about the arrival of a great medicine man, because she new that her husband would not welcome any sage. So, in the mistaken belief that the sage was a doctor, he was duly welcomed, worshipped and honoured. The wife washed his feet and offered the washed water to her husband, telling him that it was the medicine prepared for him to cure the disease. Meanwhile, Stumb, whose condition had deteriorated, was thinking of his lover and, in his stupor, he bit the fingers of his wife as she tried to put the water (disguised as medicine) into his mouth. He died with that finger-end in his mouth. This resulted in his taking a birth as a hunter (Vyādha).

In his second birth, this hunter called Vyādha (a tormentor and killer) became very cruel, waylaying and killing travelers and cutting off their fingers to keep count. Once this Vyādha waylaid sage Śaṅkha who lived on the banks of river Pampā in south India and had gone to rive Godāvarī to take a holy bath, and from there had gone to Kaṇṭakācala forest to do penance. It was a hot summer afternoon, and the bandit Vyādha snatched all the sage's clothes as well as his slippers. The sage's feet roasted on hot ground and he was greatly distressed. Due to the effect of one single good deed done in his previous life as Stumb, when he was made to drink the water used to wash the feet of sage Devala, mercy sprouted in his heart, and he returned the footwear to sage Śaṅkha. The sage talked with him, and the sage's company brought about a change in the heart of Vyādha, the hunter. He realised his follies and sought the sage's guidance for his emancipation and salvation. This episode occurs in Chapter 17, verse nos. 8-20 of Vaiśākha Khaṇḍa of Skanda Purāṇa. Observing that with this sinful body the man would not be able to do anything worthwhile, the sage decided on the simplest of means for salvation—repeating and meditating upon the holy, salvation providing Mantra, 'Rāma'. He told the Vyādha that due to its good effects, he will take another (third) birth in the hermitage of one sage named Vālmīka, and would thenceforth be renowned as his son 'Vālmīki' (literally meaning one belonging to the family of Vālmīka). After this advice, sage Śaṅkha went his way to the south.

तस्माद् रामेति तन्नाम जप व्याध निरन्तरम्।
धर्मानेतान् कुरु व्याध यावदामरणान्तिकम्।।
ततस्ते भविता जन्म वल्मीकस्य ऋषेः कुले।
वाल्मीकिरिति नाम्ना च भूमौ ख्यातिं गमिष्यसि।।
इति व्याधं समादिश्य प्रतस्थे दक्षिणां दिशम्।
(अध्याय 21, श्लोक 48-57)

tasmād rāmeti tannāma japa vyādha nirantaram /
dharmānetān kuru vyādha yāvadāmaraṇāntikam //
tataste bhavitā janma valmīkasya ṛṣeḥ kule /
vālamīkiriti nāmnā ca bhūmau khyātiṃ gamiṣyasi //
iti vyādhaṃ samādiśya pratasthe dakṣiṇāṃ diśam /
(Adh 21, Śl. 48-57)

It so happened that a sage named Kṛṇu did penance for a long time, without moving, on the banks of river Pampā. An anthill developed on his motionless body. The local population used to call him Vālmīka because of this anthill. After finishing his Tapa (penance and austerity), he once heard some beautiful and lustful women talking with each other, and this caused him to ejaculate. His sperms were accepted by a woman of the dancing tribe called 'Naṭa', and her name was Śailuṣī. The son produced from her was known as Vālmīki. This part of the story appears in Chapter 21, verse nos. 64-68 of this section of the Skanda Purāṇa as mentioned above.

(iii) Skanda Purāṇa, Nāgara Khaṇḍa, Chapter 124, in the section dealing with the importance of Hāṭakeśvara, has this version of the birth of Vālmīki—there was a Brāhmin named Lohajaṅga in the clan of Māṇḍavya of Camatkārapura. Though he used to faithfully serve his parents (i.e. he was a righteous and honourable man), due to some adverse circumstances and famine, he became a robber in order to sustain the family. Once he came in contact with the 7 celestial sages. The rest of the story follows the pattern as described in Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa (see serial no. a). A jovial sage named Pulaha advised him to repeat (do Japa) a 4-letter meaningless word 'Jāṭaghoṭa' just to poke fun at Lohajaṅga because he thought that such a sinful person can never sincerely do Japa of a real Mantra. He must be surely joking, so thought the sage.

जाटघोटेति मन्त्रोऽयं सर्वसिद्धिप्रदायकः।
तमेनं जप विप्रं त्वं दिवारात्रमतन्द्रितः।।
(अध्याय 124, श्लोक 64)

jāṭaghoṭeti mantro'yaṃ sarvasiddhipradāyakaḥ /
tamenaṃ japa vipraṃ tvaṃ divārātramatandritaḥ //
(Adh. 124, Śl. 64)

Sage Pulaha told Lohajaṅga, 'The word 'Jāṭaghoṭa' is a great Mantra, and it has the potential to provide all success and mystical powers. So, oh Brāhmin, you should repeat it day and night incessantly' (chapter 124, verse no. 64). The point to note here is that the word 'Jāṭaghoṭa' is a meaningless jumble of words. But nevertheless it was Lohajaṅga's sincerity and firm faith in the sage's advice—that what a teacher advices is indeed true and there should be no question about its potential to provide salvation—that made this worthless combination of letters acquire powers which rivaled the actual great mantra 'Rāma' in its potentials of providing emancipation and salvation. The rest of the story follows the usual pattern as described above in serial number (a) regarding Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa.

(iv) Skanda Purāṇa, Prabhāsa Khaṇḍa, Chapter 278 has a different version as follows—there was a Brāhmin named Śamimukha. His son Vaiśākha became a dacoit to meet the needs of his family. He met the sesven sages and the rest of the story is similar to Nagara Khaṇḍa version (as described in serial no. iii above). The only difference is that here the 4 letter Mantra was 'Jhāṭaghoṭa' instead of 'Jāṭaghoṭa'.

(c) In another Rāmāyaṇa known as 'Tattva Saṅgraha Rāmāyaṇa' the story is similar to the one in Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa except that the seven celestial sages, when they were undecided as to what path of salvation should be prescribed to the bandit, were advised by an invisible divine voice from the sky to prescribe 'Māra' word as the Mantra to the bandit who was later to become Vālmīki.

(d) The story described in 'Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa' is similar to the one described in Skanda Purāṇa, Vaiṣṇava Khaṇḍa as detailed in serial no. b (ii). The only variation occurs regarding his third birth. Here, in the Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa version, the sperms came out from sage Kṛṇu's eyes (in the form of his tears) and they were accepted by some female serpent from whom Vālmīki was born. Being an orphan, he was brought up by the Kirāta tribe (see serial no. a above). It was because of this raising that he became a robber. He was finally liberated when he met the 7 sages.

(e) 'Kṛttivāsa Rāmāyaṇa' has a different twist to his ancestry. It says that Ratnākara, the Vyādha or hunter, was a son of sage Cyavana and his salvation was brought about by the teachings of Brahmā, the creator, and Nārada, the celestial sage. The story in brief in this—Ratnākara was born in the Gotra (lineage, family) of sage Aṅgirā. From his childhood, Ratnākara was brought up in the company of thugs and robbers. Once he ambushed sage Nārada who told him that killing and robbing innocent people was an unpardonable and horrible sin. Why does he do it? Ratnākara's reply and his subsequent renunciation follows the same pattern as described by Veda Vyāsa in Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa (see serial no. a above). The only variation here is that Nārada was the one who showed the path of salvation to Ratnākara instead of the 7 celestial sages. Brahmā, the creator, was so pleased by his severe penances and austerities (Tapa) that he came to him, sprinkled some holy water from his Kamaṇḍalu (water pot) on the anthill that had formed around Ratnākara's immobile body as he sat in deep meditation. This holy water revived the anthill-covered body, and Brahma christened him as 'Vālmīki'—the one who is born from an anthill.

The important point to note here is that Vālmīki's scholarship in writing the twin epics—'Rāmāyaṇa and Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa'—was received as a boon when he pleased Lord Śiva (Skanda Purāṇa, Avanti Khaṇḍa, section 5, Chapter 27). It is believed that once Vālmīki saw a hunter killing a bird from a pair of male and female. Shocked and grieved at the anguish suffered by the surviving bird upon the death of its companion, Vālmīki cursed the hunter and the words of curse came out from his mouth in the form of verses of Sanskrit called 'Chanda', which are perfect poetical style of composition in which the Vedas were narrated.

Besides the Vedas, this was the first perfect Chanda pronounced by man, and that is why Vālmīki came to be known as 'Ādi Kavi', i.e. the first ancient classical poet.

Further, the father and mother of Vālmīki were not necessarily Brāhmins, as we have seen from the different versions giving different parentage of Vālmīki.

(f) Śrī Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa, who was a great scholar of Sanskrit grammar, had written a detailed commentary of Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa about 400 years ago. In it he writes, 'The ancient poet Vālmīki wished to describe something which was to be the best and most excellent in literature. To obtain the competence to do so, both the ability as well as the selection of subject matter, he did severe Tapa (penance and austerity) and obtained a state of deep Samādhi (which is a trance-like immobile state during meditation). Sage Nārada, on divine inspiration and for a divine purpose, appeared before him. When Vālmīki asked for something that was 'the best', Nārada told him the story of Rāmāyaṇa in very brief and went his way. For the welfare of the four Varṇas (i.e. classes of people in the society, such as the Brāhmins, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas, and Śūdras) and to free them from the 'triad of torments' from which they suffered (called the sufferings from Daihika—torments pertaining to the body, such as diseases; Daivika—torments pertaining to malignant and malevolent Gods and stars; and Bhautika—torments pertaining to the terrestrial world, such as problems created by cruel kings and animals), Vālmīki, the grandson of Pracetā and son of Prāceta, composed the epic Rāmāyaṇa having hundreds of thousands of verses. These verses were in the poetic style called 'Gāyatrī Chanda' which is a typical style of verse having 24 letters or syllables in all divided into 3 steps having 8 letters or syllables in each step. He taught the sons of Śrī Rāma, Lava and Kuśa, the epic Rāmāyaṇa extending into 24000 hymns.

In the words of Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa :—

"अथादि कविर्वाल्मीकिः सर्वोत्तमवस्तुवर्णनाय कृतसंकल्पो दिव्य तत्काव्यकृति शक्तिलाभाय" तादृश वस्तु ज्ञानाय च कृतकष्टसमाधिसाधित परमपुण्यचयः, तत्पुण्यचयसुप्रीतभगवन्नियोगसमुपागतं देवर्षिन्नारदमभ्यर्च्य "कोऽन्वस्मिन् साम्प्रतमित्यादिपप्रच्छ। स च देवर्षी रामकथा मुदितमना रामचरितमनुसृत्य संक्षेपत उपदिश्य यथागतं जगाम। ततस्तदनुग्रहलब्धं रामचरितरहस्यं निरवशेषं तत्प्रसादादेव

सम्यग्विज्ञाय भूलोकवर्तिनाम् चतुर्णा वर्णानां तापत्रयविमोचनाय ब्रह्मांशभूत एव भगवान् प्राचेतसो वाल्मीकिः स्वकृत शत कोटि रामायणशारभूतं चतुर्विंशत्यक्षर गायत्र्याख्य परब्रह्मविद्याविलास भूतं रामायणं चतुर्विंशति सहस्त्रश्लोक रूपं कुशलवाभ्यामग्राहयत्।

"athādi kavirvālmīkiḥ sarvottamavastuvarṇanāya kṛtasaṃkalpo divya tatkāvyakṛti śaktilābhāya" tādṛśa vastu jñānāya ca kṛtakaṣṭasamādhisādhita paramapuṇyacayaḥ, tatpuṇyacaya-suprītabhagavanniyogasamupāgataṃ devarṣinnāradamabhyacyaṃ "ko'nvasmin sāmpratamityādipapraccha / sa ca devarṣī rāmkathā muditamanā rāmacaritamanusṛtya saṃkṣepata upadiśya yathāgataṃ jagāma / tatastadanugrahalabdhaṃ rāmacarita-rahasyaṃ nirvaśeṣaṃ tatprasādādeva samyagvijñāya bhūlokavartināṃ vaturṇā varṇānaṃ tāpatrayavimocanāya brahmāṃśabhūta eva bhagavān prācetaso vālmīliḥ svakṛta śata koṭi rāmāyaṇaśārabhūtaṃ vaturviṃśatyakṣara gāyatryākhya parabrahmavidyāvilāsa bhūtaṃ rāmāyaṇaṃ caturviṃśati sahasraśloka rūpaṃ kuśalavābhyāmagrāhayat /

We note that according to this version of Vālmīki's life, the reason for doing Tapa was not to repent for his sins but to acquire the supreme knowledge about Brahma and existence as well as erudition that was the 'best', and to be able to create something that would help people to tide over their miserable and mundane existence, and which would give them some refreshing wind of spirituality and help them in their quest for emancipation and salvation. The pattern of story telling was selected by Vālmīki because it would have a mass appeal as opposed to dry philosophical discussion and preaching based on the Upaniṣads or incantation of the hymns of the Vedas, which a common man could not fathom nevertheless. Indeed, the story of Śrī Rāma is so captivating and enchanting that even after thousands of years and hundreds of versions and repeated hearings and tellings, its charm has never diminished. Every new reading is as refreshing as if it was being heard for the first time. It has undergone so many changes and adaptations that often there seems to be no correlation between any two versions. For example, the 'Thai version of Rāmāyaṇa' has many elements incompatible with the Indian versions of Rāmāyaṇa. This is because the story, once it went to other lands, was quickly assimilated and integrated with the local customs and culture. It in no way demeaned or insinuated the 'holiness and divinity' aspect of the text, but it was more in conformation to local customs and standards. This adaptability made it so acceptable to the various geographical realms of the world. Bigotry would have stifled it; there is no wander in it. As we have just seen, even the Hindu texts which describe Vālmīki's birth have different versions and different views, though the fact must have been one. If Vālmīki had a particular man as his father, this fact cannot be tinkered with. But it has indeed been done so according to different versions of his parentage as outlined earlier in this appendix.

(g) Vālmīki's own epic Rāmāyaṇa—Ancient sages were not in the habit of eulogising themselves while writing great texts. So sage Vālmīki also hid his lineage and upbringing as far as he could avoid mentioning them. But a brief glimpse appears in Uttara Kāṇḍa, 96/19 of the epic Rāmāyaṇa when the sage says on oath at the time of proving Sītā's innocence before the royal assembly of Śrī Rāma—'प्रचेतसोऽहं दशमः पुत्रो राघवनन्दन। न स्मराम्यनृतं वाक्यम् इमौतु तव पुत्रकौ।। (रामायण, उत्तरकाण्ड, 96/19)' meaning 'Oh the son of Raghu's clan, Śrī Rāma! I am the 10th son of Pracetā. I do not remember that I have ever told a lie. These two (Lava and Kuśa) are your sons (and no body else's) (Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa, Uttara Kāṇḍa, 96/19). He says further, 'बहु वर्ष सहस्राणि तपश्चर्या मया कृता। नोपश्नीयां फलन्तस्या दुष्टेयं यदि मैथिली।। (रामायण, उत्तरकाण्ड, 96/20)' meaning 'I have done severe penances for many thousands of years. Let me not benefit from it (or let all of it go in vain) if Sītā is unchaste and unrighteous' (Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa, Uttara Kāṇḍa, 96/20). Again he says—'मनसा कर्मणा वाचा भूतपूर्वं न किल्विषम्। तस्याहं फलमश्नामि अपात्रा यदि मैथिली।। (रामायण, उत्तरकाण्ड, 96/21)', meaning 'I have never committed any sin with my mind, deeds and words even earlier. Let me gain the benefit of its reward (of never committing a sin) if Sītā is not sinful and corrupt' (Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa, Uttara Kāṇḍa, 96/21).

These verses clearly show the Vālmīki was the son of Pracetā, a version which endorses the view expressed by Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa (see serial no. f above). Further, the fact that he says he has never committed any sin in his life seems contradictory to the established fact that he was a great robber prior to his becoming a saint. But it must be remembered that after doing penances and atoning for his sins, when he had emerged from the anthill, he was deemed to be 'reborn' with a new life and identity; his past was 'shed' life the cuticle of a snake. In his new life as 'sage' Vālmīki, he indeed hadn't committed any sin. Endless debates and peeling of skins of onions, as it were notwithstanding, the simple interpretation about his not being a sinner in his earlier life is most plausible.

Vālmīki as Veda Vyāsa :—(h) Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Chapter 3, verse no. 11-21 lists the name of 29 'Vyāsas' or preachers who taught the scriptures, expounded upon the Vedas, classified them into 4 main branches, compiled the Upaniṣads and wrote the Purāṇas. It says the in each celestial cycle of four Yugas (eras), a different Vyāsa takes birth and he classifies the Vedic text into four parts—the Ṛg, Sāma, Yajur and Atharva Vedas. Sage Pārāśara says to Maitreya that 'after him (the 23rd Vyāsa named Tṛṇabindu), a sage named 'Ṛkṣa' became Veda Vyāsa. He is known as Vālmīki now' (Viṣṇu Purāṇa, 3/3/18)—'ऋक्षोऽभूद भार्गवस्तस्माद् वाल्मीकिर्योऽभिधीयते। (विष्णु पुराण, 3/3/18)'

The word 'Ṛkṣa' used in the verse is the name given to the 24th Veda Vyāsa by his father; while Vālmīki is the name which 'Ṛkṣa' acquired after his body was covered by an anthill during his severe Tapa and meditation.

(i) This version of Vālmīki being one of the 29 Veda Vyāsas who had classified the Vedas into four parts is also endorsed in Vāyu Purāṇa—'परिवर्ते चतुर्विंशे ऋक्षो व्यासो भविष्यति। (वायु पुराण, 33/164)' which means 'in the 34th 4-Yuga cycle, there would be a Vyāsa (a preacher) named 'Ṛkṣa' (Vāyu Purāṇa, 33/164).

(j) Kūrma Purāṇa is very explicit on this matter. It says 'तृणबिन्दुस्त्रयोविंशे वाल्मीकिस्तुततः परम्, (कूर्म पुराण)', which means 'in the 23rd 4-Yuga cycle, Tṛṇabindu was the Vyāsa, while Vālmīki was the Vyāsa after him (in the 24th cycle). [One 4-Yuga cycle = 43,20,000 terrestrial years approximately.]

The entire list of all the great sages who were called 'Veda Vyāsa' down the ages from the hoary past when the creation first came into existence is mentioned in Viṣṇu Purāṇa, 3rd Chapter, verse no. 11-21. The list of Veda Vyāsas is as follows—

(i) Svayambhū, (ii) Prajāpati, (iii) Uśnā, (iv) Bṛhaspati, (v) Savitā, (vi) Mṛtyu, (vii) Indra, (viii) Vasiṣtha, (ix) Sārasvata, (x) Tridhāmā, (xi) Triśikhi, (xii) Bhāradvāja-I, (xiii) Antarikṣa, (xiv) Varṇī, (xv) Trayyaruṇa, (xvi) Dhanañjaya, (xvii) Kratañjaya, (xviii) Jaya, (xix)

Bhāradvāja-II, (xx) Gautama, (xxi) Haryātma, (xxii) Vājaśravā, (xxiii) Tṛṇabindu, (xxiv) **Ṛkṣa,** (Vālmīki, the author of this Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa, (xxv) Śakti, (xxvi) Pārāśara, (xxvii) Jātukarṇa, (xxviii) Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana, and (xxix) Aśvathāmā.

(k) It must be noted that all the Veda Vyāsa had also written the Purāṇas. Therefore, it is logical to deduce that Vālmīki, known also as Ṛkṣa, must have written the Purāṇas too like his other peers, and to extend the logic further, since the Purāṇas were mythological histories and were therefore subject to variations and divergence in the narration of events and the time factor involved depending upon the current condition that prevailed at the time of their individual rendering, the epic story of Śrī Rāma is also a history, though not so much mythological as the other Purāṇas because of the fact that Vālmīki was a contemporary of Śrī Rāma and it was in his hermitage that Sītā was sent in for her second exile and where her two sons, Lava and Kuśa, were born. So Vālmīki's narration was a contemporary history of Śrī Rāma as compared to other Purāṇas.

Further, Vālmīki's lifetime straddled the two Yugas—the later half of Tretā and the earlier half of Dvāpara (i.e. the 2nd and the 3rd Yugas of the 4-Yuga cycle). This fact is corroborated by Brahma-Vaivarta Purāṇa, Prakṛti Khaṇḍa, Chapter 5, in which sage Yājñavalkya has stated while praying to the patron Goddess of speech, Goddess Sārasvatī, as follows—'व्यास: पुराणसूत्रञ्च पप्रच्छ वाल्मीकं यदा। मौनिभूत: स सस्मार त्वामेव जगदम्बिकाम।। (123) सम्प्राप्यं निर्मलं ज्ञानं प्रमादध्वंस कारणम पुराणसूत्रम्....(124)'. It means 'Oh mother! Once, sage Vyāsa (Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa, the 28th Vyāsa) asked sage Vālmīki about the source of all the Purāṇas. Vālmīki closed his eyes in contemplation and remembered (invoked) you. As a result of his remembering you, he got pure wisdom, excellent expertise and superior erudition and knowledge which dispelled all his 'Ajñāna' (ignorance, lack of wisdom, erudition and knowledge) enabling him to explain the basic tenets, the essential principles and factors that constitute the Purāṇas to Vyāsa' (Brahma-Vaivarta Purāṇa, Khaṇḍa, 5/123-124).

This establishes that Vālmīki was a teacher of Purāṇas as well, besides being the classifier of Vedas in the 24th four-Yuga cycle.

The reason for the **differences between the various versions of Vālmīki's life** in the Purāṇas must be properly understood—

(a) Purāṇas are mythological histories, narrating events that happened in different planes of time called 'Kalpas', which is approximately 432×10^7 years of mankind on earth and only count for one day of Brahma, the creator. Since such a long period of time is involved in human terms, there is no wonder that the variations find their place in different versions.

(b) The main objects of the Purāṇas, which are also called 'Dharma Śāstras', is to elucidate the principles of the Vedas and Upaniṣads in a more charming form by weaving a parable or a story around the main metaphysical, theological or spiritual theme. They try to explain the principles by the familiar story telling pattern. They expound upon Brahma and other elements of religion and metaphysics, but since the medium chosen by the Purāṇas is the story, therefore it is not necessary that they stick to the actual happenings to make them 'perfect' histories. They do go out of their way to make the story more charming and alluring for the listener and the reader. The dichotomy appears because the narrator lays more emphasis on one aspect of metaphysics, theology or spiritualism than the other aspect.

(c) For the purpose of story telling, ornamental language is often used to beautify the composition and make it more colourful and vibrant. But when debated in pure grammatical terms and analysed in more orthodox terms, different interpretations appear for a seemingly harmless word used by the narrator or composer of the Purāṇa as the substitute for the actual word which he ought to have used to describe a particular event and its characters, and the way that word is used in the present time. This he does just to add flavour to his composition and not to purposely twist the fact.

(d) A single person has many aliases or nicknames. He might also use a pseudonym to hide his identity. This is a practice practiced even today by authors. This also creates confusion. That is why Vālmīki is known by so many names.

(e) Adaptation according to the culture and tradition of the country over the ages and also due to geographical separation—though the main theme and characters remain more or less the same, the way their names are spelled and pronounced, the way they behave and interact, their moral standards, the details of the story—all of them may vary from one country to another, and from one era to another.

This is most evident in the case of Rāmāyaṇa, where different countries where the story took its roots had its own interpretation of it and produced its own version of the epic having names of characters which had the influence of the local dialect, and the texture of the story also underwent changes according to the local customs and standards.

(l) Ṛg Veda, 10th Maṇḍala (division) 99th Sūkta (hymn) has 12 Mantras (Ṛcās, divine and holy Ślokas). **Sage Vālmīki is also said to be the 'seer' of this Sūkta**, or the sage who had first conceptualised these mantras in his mind, who visualised and conceived them first, because its introductory part says—'the seer of this Mantra is Vabhro Vaikhānasa' (कं नो वभ्रो वैखानस:, ऋग्वेद, 10/99). The word 'Vabhro' means an anthill or Vālmīka in Sanskrit, and the word 'Vaikhānasa' means a forest dwelling hermit. Hence, 'the forest dwelling hermit known as Vabhro, or one who had anthill around him, is the creator of these hymns of the Ṛg Veda' (Ṛg Veda, 10/99). A separate appendix no. 2 gives the entire Sūkta with its meaning.

It is quiet logical and natural to say that part of the Ṛg Veda has been conceptualised by sage Vālmīki as Vibhro, who had also classified the rest of the composite text of the unclassified Vedas into 4 parts, known as Ṛg, Sāma, Yajur and Atharva.

(m) There is also a belief that **Vālmīki was a manifestation of the creator Brahmā** who had taken his form in order to describe the great epic story of Śrī Rāma which the creator has conceived in his heart but thought it proper to divulge it for the larger good of the subjects of his creation. This fact is also mentioned in Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa, Canto 27, verse no. 20, 22. The great Sanskrit scholar Śrī Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa, in his commentary on the epic Rāmāyaṇa written in the 17th century AD (approximate 400 years ago; see serial no. f above) has said, while introducing Vālmīki—'Lord Prāceta Vālmīki is a fractional manifestation of Brahma, the creator. He (Vālmīki) first created the Rāmāyaṇa of the hundreds of thousands of verses, but decided to present an abridged version for the welfare of all human kind' (ब्रह्मांशसम्भूत एव भगवान प्राचेतसो वाल्मीकि: स्वकृतशतकोटि रामायणसारभूतम्).

On other hand, Matsya Purāṇa clearly endorses the views expressed in Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa (canto 27, verse no. 20, 22) by saying—'वाल्मीकिना च यत् प्रोक्तं रामोपाख्यानमुत्तमम्। ब्रह्मणा चोदितं तच्च शतकोटिप्रविस्तरम्।।

आहृत्य नारदेनैव वाल्मीकाय निवेदितम्। (मत्स्य पुराण)'. This verse means 'the great and excellent narration of the episodes or events pertaining to the life of Śrī Rāma, were described by Vālmīki. It was conceived by Brahma (the creator) and it extended to hundreds and thousands of Ślokas (verses). He (Brahmā) preached it to Nārada and the latter most obligingly gave it to Vālmīki (Matsya Purāṇa)'.

Thus, Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa's contention that Vālmīki was a manifestation of Brahmā to preach the divine story of Rāmāyaṇa to the world, and Matsya Purāṇa's as well as Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa's versions that Brahmā was the first one to create it leads us to deduce that Vālmīki and Brahmā are the same authorities as far as the creation of the epic is concerned. Out of all the Gods, it was Brahmā who had created the Vedas and the Chandas which formed the basis upon which the words of the Vedic hymns were founded, because he was the most learned and scholarly of the plethora of Gods in the immortal world of heaven were the scriptures were first said to have been conceptualised. Similarly, composing the twin epics (Rāmāyaṇa and Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa) required no lesser skills than that required to compose the Vedas; in fact, ancient scholars have labelled Rāmāyaṇa as the '5th Veda', and therefore Vālmīki, who conceived and composed it, was no less than Brahmā in importance and stature. We must note that 'Brahma' is a 'title of honour and a designation' given to the creator of the world because he did it on behalf of Brahmā, the supreme, transcendental and final authority of this creation who had no form. Brahmā was Brahma's first manifestation as a male creator and Prajāpati, while Mother Nature was Brahmā's female counterpart.

Similarly, 'Vālmīki' is a title or name given to a person who had emerged from an anthilī and who was completely transformed from a wicked man to an erudite and wise scholarly sage. Even as Brahmā got his name from Brahmā, Vālmīki derived his name from Vālmīka, meaning an anthill. Even as Brahmā created the Vedas, Vālmīki created their counterpart as Rāmāyaṇa. And since Rāmāyaṇa is said to be created by either of these two authorities, Brahmā and Vālmīki, and no one else, it follows that these two gentlemen were the same person, may be not in pure physical terms as we humans generally understand the term to mean, but technically, genetically they were the same authority. Further, it has been repeatedly emphasised, even in the present book 'Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa' in its last canto 27, that the story was first conceptualised in the mind and heart of Brahmā, and it was narrated by Vālmīki for the benefit of human kind on this earth, it also goes on to show that they were linked to each other.

So if the epic Rāmāyaṇa is honoured with the title of being the 5th Veda meant for the common man as opposed to the other 4 Vedas meant for scholarly persons such as the Brāhmins, there is no wonder in it, because even the lowest man in the social hierarchy had a right to get deliverance and emancipation, and the story pattern was more acceptable to a layman than dry philosophical discourses of the Vedas and Upaniṣads which were beyond his intellectual reach. Vālmīki was Brahmā in human form in as much as he showed them the path of salvation and emancipation by narrating the essence of the Vedas and Upaniṣads in the form of Rāmāyaṇa which is one treatise that epitomises all the exemplary virtues which the Vedas and Upaniṣads stood for, propounded, expounded upon, hailed and exemplified. The story of Rāmāyaṇa weaved in its texture as its integral part the great philosophies of the Vedas, Upaniṣads and other schools of thought such as Śaṅkhaya Śāstra, Yoga Darśana etc.

Caste of Vālmīki :—Śrī Rāma has addressed Vālmīki by the words 'Brāhmin' in the epic Rāmāyaṇa, Uttara Kāṇḍa, canto 97, verse no. 1, 4.

प्रत्ययस्तु मम 'ब्रह्मं' स्तव वाक्यैरकल्मषैः।(1)
सेयं लोकभयाद् 'ब्रह्मन्' अपापेत्यभिजानता।।(4)
(रामायण, उत्तरकाण्ड, सर्ग 97)

pratyayastu mama 'brahmaṃ' stava vākyairakalmaṣaiḥ /
seyaṃ lokabhayāda 'brahman' apāpetyabhijānatā //
(Rāmāyaṇa, Uttarakāṇḍa, Sarga 97)

Śrī Rāma has clearly used the word 'Brāhmin' to address Vālmīki. Further, a person's birth is irrelevant to his life. For example, Rāvaṇa was Brāhmin by birth and caste, but he was meat eating, cruel and a merciless demon. So his deeds were never in conformation to his birth as a Brāhmin, and therefore it was not a sin for a Kṣatriya king Śrī Rāma to kill a Brāhmin Rāvaṇa whose life and deeds made him worse than a Śūdra, a low caste sinful man. On the contrary, Śabarī, the old outcaste woman, and Niṣada, the head boatman, were both born in low castes, but they were honoured by Śrī Rāma himself—he ate out of the hands of Śabarī and performed her last rites as if she was his own mother, and he embraced Niṣada, the tribal boatman.

Again, the fact that Vālmīki was revered and honoured for his wisdom, erudition, enlightenment and scholarship which are the hallmarks of a true Brāhmin whose main function is to teach others is highlighted in Padma Purāṇa, Pātāla Khaṇḍa, 66/12 as follows—

वेदान् सांगानहं सर्वान् ग्राह्यामास भूपते।

(पद्मपुराण, पाताल खण्ड, 66/12)

vedān sāṃgānahaṃ sarvān grāhyāmāsa bhūpate /

(Padmapurāṇa, Pātāla Khaṇḍa, 66/12)

'I have taught the king's (Śrī Rāma) son (Lava and Kuśa) grammar alongside the Vedas'. Since Vedas should and could be preached only by most scholarly persons, Vālmīki was a Brāhmin by profession and vocation.

Padma Purāṇa, Pātāla Khaṇḍa, 66/144 says—

एकदागतवान् 'विप्रो' वाल्मीकिर्विपिनं महत्।
यत्र तालास्तमालाश्च किंशुका यत्र पुष्पिताः।।

(पद्मपुराण, पाताल खण्ड, 66/144)

ekadāgatavān 'vipro' vālmīkirvipinaṃ mahat /
yatra tālāstamālāśca kiṃśukā yatra puṣpitāḥ //

(Padmapurāṇa, Pātāla Khaṇḍa, 66/144)

'Once, the Brāhmin (—Vipro) Vālmīki went to that great forest where trees called Tāla (coconut), Tamāla (black catechu plant), and Palāśa (the tree butea frondosa) were laden with blooming flowers'. These words of Vyāsa (Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa, who was the composer of this Purāṇa), clearly endorses the fact that Vālmīki, his predecessor, was a Brāhmin.

Different names of Vālmīki—

(1) ऋक्षोऽभूद भार्गवस्तस्माद् वाल्मीकिर्योऽभिधीयते......

(विष्णुपुराण, 3/3/18)

ṛkṣo'bhūda bhārgavastasmād vālamīkiryo'bhidhīyate.....

(Viṣṇu Purāṇa, 3/3/18)

(2) ... 'ऋक्षो व्यासी भविष्यति' (वायुपुराण, 33/164)

......'ṛkṣo vyāsī bhaviṣyati' *(Vāyu Purāṇa, 33/164)*

(3) ऽतृप्तस्तं मुनिं वन्दे प्राचेतसमकल्मषम्।
वेदः प्राचेतसादासीत् साक्षात् रामायणात्मना।।
एवमुक्तो भरद्वाजो वाल्मीकेन महात्मना। (रामायण, 1/2/7)
'tṛptastaṃ muniṃ vande prācetasamakalmaṣam /
vedaḥ prācetasādāsīt sākṣāt rāmāyaṇātmanā //
evamukto bharadvājo vālmīkena mahatmanā /
(Rāmāyaṇa, 1/2/7)

(4) पुरा नारायणश्चेमां वाल्मीकाय कृपानिधिः।
(ब्रह्मवैवर्तपुराण, प्रकृति खण्ड, 4/53)
purā nārāyaṇaścemāṃ vālmīkāya kṛpānidhiḥ /
(Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa, Prakṛti Khaṇḍa, 4/53)

(5) पठनाद् धारणाद् वाग्मीकवीन्द्रो वल्मिको मुनिः।
(ब्रह्मवैवर्तपुराण, प्रकृति खण्ड, 4/66)
paṭhanād dhāraṇād vāgmīkavindro valmiko muniḥ /
(Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa, Prakṛti Khaṇḍa, 4/66)

The various names of sage Vālmīki, as they appear in the above citations from different Purāṇas and Vālmīki's own Rāmāyaṇa, are—(a) Ṛkṣa, (b) Prācetas or Pracetās, (c) Bhārgava, (d) Vālmīki, (e) Vālmīka or Valmīk, (f) Vabhra, (g) Cyavana or Cyavan, (h) Cyavanī. Out of these, the most popular name is 'Vālmīki' followed by Pracetās and Bhārgava.

* * *

Appendix - 2

Vālmīki's Ṛg Veda Sūkta

कं नश्चित्रमिष्यसि चिकित्त्वान् पृथुग्मानं वाश्रं वावृधध्यै।
कत्तस्य दातु शबसो व्युष्टौ तक्षद् वज्रं वृत्रतुरमपिन्वत्।।1।।
kaṃ naścitramiṣyasi cikittvān pṛthugmānaṃ vāśraṃ vāvṛdhadhyai /
kattasya dātu śabaso vyuṣṭau takṣad vajraṃ vṛtraturamapinvat //
स हिद्युता विद्युता वेति साम पृथुं योनिमसुरत्त्वा ससाद।
स सनीलेभिः प्रसह्मनो अस्य भ्रातुर्न ऋते सप्तथस्य मायाः।।2।।
sa hidyutā vidyutā veti sāma pṛthuṃ yonimasurattvā sasāda /
sa sanīlebhiḥ prasahāno asya bhrāturna ṛte saptathasya māyāḥ //
स वाजं यातापदुष्पदा यन्त्स्वर्षाता परिषदत् सनिष्यन्।
अनर्वा यच्छतदुरस्य वेदो घ्नञ्छिश्नदेवाँ अभि वर्पसा भूत्।।3।।
sa vājaṃ yātāpaduṣpadā yantsvarṣātā pariṣadat saniṣyan /
anarvā yacchatadurasya vedo ghnañchiśnadevāṁ abhi varpasā bhut //
स यह्व्योऽवनीर्गोष्ववर्वा जुहोति प्रघन्यासु सस्त्रिः।
अपादो यत्र युज्यासोऽरथा द्रोण्यश्वास ईरते घृतं वाः।।4।।
sa yahvyo'vanīrgoṣvarvā juhoti praghanyāsu sasriḥ /
apādo yatra yujyāso'rathā droṇyaśvāsa īrate ghṛtaṃ vāḥ //
स रुद्रेभिराशस्तवार ऋभ्याहित्त्वी गयमारे अवद्य आगात्।
वभ्रस्य मन्ये मिथुना विवव्री अन्नमभीत्यारोदयन्मुषायन्।।5।।
sa rudrebhirāśastavāra ṛbhyāhittvī gayamāre avadha āgāt /
vabhrasya manye mithunā vivavrī annamabhītyārodayanmuṣāyan //
स इद्दासं तुवीरवं पतिर्वन्षलक्षं त्रिशीर्षाणं दमन्यत।
अस्यत्रितो न्वोजसा वृधानो विपा वराहमयो अग्रया हन्।।6।।
sa iddāsaṃ tuvīravaṃ patirvanṣalakṣaṃ triśīrṣāṇaṃ damanyat /
asyatrito nvojasā vṛdhāno vipā varāhamayo aghrayā han //
स दुह्वणे मनुष ऊर्ध्वसान आसाविषदर्शसानाय शरुम्।
स नृतमो नहुषोऽस्मत् सुजातः पुरोऽभिनदर्हन् वस्युहत्ये।।7।।

sa druhvaṇe manuṣa ūrdhvasāna āsāviṣadarśasānāya śarum /
sa nṛtamo nahuṣo'smat sujātaḥ puro'bhinadarhan vasyuhatye //

सो अभ्रियो न यवस उदन्यन् क्षयाय गातुं विदन्नो अस्मे।
उप यत्सीददिन्दुं शरीरैः श्येनोऽयोपाष्टिर्हन्ति दस्यून्।।8।।

so abhriyo na yavasa udanyan kṣayāya ghātuṃ vidanno asme /
upa yat sīdadinduṃ śarīraiḥ śyeno.ayopāṣṭirhanti dasyūn //

स व्राधतः शवसानेभिरस्य कुत्साय शुष्णं कृपणे परादात्।
अयं कविसनयच्छ्स्यमानमत्कं यो अस्य सनितोत नृणाम्।।9।।

sa vrādhataḥ śavasānebhirasya kutsāya śuṣṇaṃ kṛpaṇe parādāt /
ayaṃ kavisanayacchasyamānamatkaṃ yo asya sanitota nṛṇām //

अयं दशस्यन्नर्येभिरस्य दस्मो देवेभिर्वरुणो न मायी।
अयं कनीन ऋतुपा अवेद्यमिमीतारुं यश्चतुष्पात्।।10।।

ayaṃ daśasyannaryebhirasya dasmo devebhirvaruṇo na māyī /
ayaṃ kanīna ṛtupā avedyamimītāraruṃ yaścatuṣpāt //

अस्य स्तोमेभिरौशिज ऋजिश्वा व्रजं दरयद् वृषभेण पिप्रोः।
सुत्त्वा यद् यजतो दीदयद्गीः पुर इयानो अभि वर्पसाभूत्।।11।।

asya stomebhirauśija ṛjiśvā vrajaṃ darayad vṛṣabheṇa piproḥ /
suttvā yad yajato dīdayadghīḥ pura iyāno abhi varpasābhūt //

एवा महो असुर वक्षथाय वभ्रकः षड्भिरूपसर्पदिन्द्रम।
स इयानः करति स्वस्तिमस्मा इषमूर्जं सुक्षितिं विश्वमाभाः।।12।।
(ऋग्वेद, 10वां मण्डल, सूक्त 99)

evā maho asura vakṣathāya vabhrakaḥ ṣaḍbhirupasarpadindram /
sa iyānaḥ karati svastimasmā iṣamūrjaṃ sukṣitiṃ viśvamābhāḥ //
(Ṛgveda, Maṇḍala 10, Sūkta 99)

Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Chapter 3, verse no. 11-21 states that there are 29 erudite and enlightened scholars who had classified the composite undivided text of the Vedas into their present four parts—the Ṛg, Sāma, Yajur and Atharva. These people were called 'Vyāsa' because they preached the Vedas, they were the exponents of the Vedas and they expounded and explicitly elaborated upon the text. A full list of these 29 Vyāsa is given in appendix no. 1. Vālmīki was the 24th in the line, and his alias was 'Ṛkṣa'. The relevant citation to establish this fact has also been given in that appendix.

Being an unmatched and preeminent enlightened prodigious scholar of repute, he was also one of the sages or seers who conceptualised certain hymns of the Ṛg Veda, the first of the 4 Vedas. The 99th Sūkta (hymn) of the 10th division of Ṛg Veda, which are dedicated to Indra, the king of Gods and the most lauded God in this particular section of the Veda, are composed by Vālmīki known with an alias 'Vabhra'. In the Anukramaṇikā, the index, of this 10th division of the Ṛg Veda which tells us about the seer who composed a particular Sūkta, the patron God to whom that particular Sūkta is dedicated etc., it is clearly stated about the 99th Sūkta—.... 'The forest dwelling sage/seer (called Vaikhānasa) who pronounced it was Vabhra' derived from the word Vabhrī meaning an anthill, which in turn is another word for 'Vālmīka'. Verse no. 5 and 12 of this particular Sūkta clearly states that it is composed by a person named Vabhra which is another name for Vālmīki. The entire Sūkta is given above in this appendix.

Further, Vālmīki had also composed the Purāṇas in his capacity as the 24th Veda Vyāsa as described in detail with relevant citations in appendix no. 1. There is no wonder then that a man who is so wise and so scholarly as to classify the Vedas, compile the Upaniṣads and pen the vast Purāṇas, will also be competent and scholarly, wise and erudite as well as enlightened enough to compose at least some of the hymns of a particular Veda. It is well established that the Vedas are not a single person's copyright creation; they have been composed by a long train of sages and seers whose names have been clearly mentioned in the Anukramaṇikā (index) appearing in each of the division of the Veda.

So, Vālmīki, alias Vabhra, composed the above Sūkta of the Ṛg Veda dedicated to Indra. It consists of 12 verses as follows—

(i) Oh Indra who understands our needs. Which praiseworthy, honorable wealth in abundance do you plan to send to us for the enhancement of our wellbeing and comfort? What charity will be left for us if Indra's Vṛtrāsura weapon (the weapon of Indra, called Vajra or Vṛtrāsura because it is with it that he had killed the demon Vṛtrāsura), sharpened and made potential (i.e. blessed) by the creator Brahmā, loses its strength, powers, ability and vitality? [That is, if Indra, the king of Gods and vanquisher of the demon Vṛtrāsura, loses his sway and control over other Gods and demons, and his potentials to control, protect or vanquish them gets diminished, what will happen to us righteous creatures who depend on the Gods, instead of the demons, for our protection and sustenance.]

(ii) That Indra arrives near the Sāma Veda which is sung during a fire sacrifice, holding the dazzling weapon called 'thunderbolt' or a ray of electric (Vajra). With all his might, he presents himself in those sacrifices which bestow great benefits or rewards to those who do them. He takes along the Maruts (the various Wind-Gods) riding on planes to attack the enemy. He is the 7th brother amongst the Sun-brothers called Ādityas, of whom Dhātā (—the creator, progenitor, preserver, sustainer and protector of creation; either Viṣṇu as Virāṭ or Brahmā the patriarch; one of the 12 Suns) and Vidhātā (the one who decides destiny, lays down the laws which govern the working of the world) are the two brothers. Such sacrifices in which Indra is present are not affected by the Śaitānika or devilish forces which try to intervene and disrupt the fire sacrifice (or any righteous and virtuous endeavour).

[Note :—(a) The word 'Indra' comes from the seed or root word 'Indrī' meaning 'the sense organs of a creature, such as the eyes, years, nose, tongue and skin'. Each has its own patron God. The Prāṇa (vital breath) is the Lord of Gods; it is like Indra. Indra is the king of Gods, hence he is worshipped and his blessings sought so that the wise creature can keep all his senses under control and inclined towards righteousness instead of unrighteousness. The various 'Vṛttis' of a man, i.e. his inherent tendencies, inclinations, desires and aspiration, decided whether 'godly' virtues are prominent in him or the 'Śaitānika' or devilish ones have the upper hand. Since the creature has to live in a world it cannot be completely isolated from its environment, but what is important is how he deals with it, how he tackles the circumstances and the world. This is where the 'goodness or godliness' in him comes into play, as does the 'Śaitāna or devil' in him. So ancient sages/seers hoped that the good virtues would prevail upon the bad ones. These Sūktas or prayers are basically telling oneself that one should be righteous, virtuous and good; one should honour and laud righteousness, virtuousness and good deeds. The various fire sacrifices were the means to keep the righteous energies activated and proclaim to the world of evil and pervert tendencies that the 'fire of righteousness' is burning fiercely to annihilate all evil, sin, perversion and all sorts of demeaning forces present in the world at large. An example of how fire can scare off evil forces is clear when people light a fire in the jungle to scare away wild animals during the night when a group of people is camping in the forest.

(b) The Ṛg Veda is essentially a compendium of the different prayers or hymns called Sūktas offered to pay homage to different Gods who represent different virtues and preside over different functions of the creature. Since Indra is the chief God, most of the Sūktas of the Ṛg Veda are in his honour. Therefore, whereas Ṛg Veda is a term used for the Ṛcās in a general manner, those composed by a particular seer in honour of a particular God were called Sūktas. The fire sacrifices, though they involved physical rituals, had a subtle meaning to them, and that was to seek the blessings of these Gods who were supposed to preside over some specific function of creation. For example, if there was a drought, the rain God was invoked, and the Ṛcās or Sūktas dedicated to that God were used while performing the fire sacrifice. It was not that mere incantations of Mantras would bring down rain, but it was the science behind the whole process that actually produced the rain by setting a conducive environment that was favourable for precipitation of rain—the various herbs used, their fumes, the sound energy generated from incantations, the self confidence created by such exercises which acted as morale boosters to help people tide over difficulties and work harder for successes in the belief that some great divine force is backing them.

(c) The 12 Ādityas—These are the legendary Suns; they are the sons of Aditi, the mother of Gods. They are 8 Vasus + Indra + Viṣṇu + Śiva + the celestial Sun (Ṛg Veda, 1/41/4-6; 2/27). According to Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa, 1/1/9/1, there are only 8 Ādityas—(i) Mitra, (ii) Varuṇa, (iii) Aryamān, (iv) Aṃśa (v) Bhaga or Brahmā (Vidhātā), (vi) Dhātā (Viṣṇu), (vii) Indra (the king of Gods), and (viii) Vivasvān Aruṇa. According to Bṛhad Āraṇkya Upaniṣad, 3/9/5, these 12 Ādityas represent the 12 months of the year.]

(iii) Proceeding to battle in a plane which cannot be brought down, he (Indra) approaches the site of battle with a desire and determination to win as trophy the wealth (dignity, honour and assets) of the enemy (i.e. to defeat the enemy). Indra, who does not turn his back in the battlefield, kills the guards of the enemy's city who are indulgent in self gratification of their organs (and therefore weak, inept and incapable of offering resistance and standing fast with a firm resolution in the face of an offensive launched by the enemy). Indra wins the treasures of the enemy (as spoils or trophy of war).

[Note :—This verse symbolises the victory of goodness over bad. It stressed that the sense organs which are allowed to be indulgent will never protect a man from the onslaught of his enemies. It invokes and prays to the patron God of good virtues to invade and trounce the evil and pervert forces that have dominated his inner-self which is compared to an enemy's city; the guards are metaphors for the sense organs of the body. Evil tendencies present in the bosom of a man are equivalent to an enemy residing in a city guarded by indulgent gatekeepers who becomes incompetent and impotent to guard it when under attack from a determined intruder.]

(iv) Indra, who resides upon the clouds, sprinkles (showers) rain upon this earth which produces immense amount and variety of wealth to sustain the creation. Upon this earth, the rivers, which are friendly to Indra (by helping him in his enterprise to collect that water poured by him and take it along to the fields to irrigate the land), move without legs and without a chariot, eternally and incessantly.

[Note :—In ancient time, agricultural was the sign for prosperity. Abundant rainfall was a sign of munificence and benevolence of the Gods. The symbolism is that when Indra is happy, when righteous and virtuousness are the predominant players in the world, there would be abundance of rainfall signifying the grace of Gods, and the rivers would be full of water signifying and endless supply of fortune to keep the earth green and the fields and meadows blooming with crop symbolising all-round wellbeing, prosperity, happiness, joy and abundance of material comfort for the creatures.]

(v) I request Indra, who gives wealth to seekers even without their expressly asking for it and who is sinless himself, to leave his exalted abode (called Indra Loka) and come down here (in my household in the terrestrial world) along with the various Maruts (the Wind-Gods). I think that if it so happens, the parents of the sage named Vabhra, who is none else but me, shall be freed from torments. He (Indra) snatches, or forcibly takes away, the food from the enemy and makes them weep (i.e. he punishes those who are evil by starving them and making them fast as a means of repentance for their sins and misdemeanours as well as a retribution for their sins).

[Note :—This verse clearly, decisively establishes that Vabhra, alias Vālmīki, is the sage or seer who had composed this Sūkta. See introduction to this appendix.]

(vi) The Lord of all (Indra) is the one who had killed him (a demon named Vṛtrāsura) who was tormenting and ruining the world and made a horrifying and terrifying noise in war (a bone chilling yell that sent shivers down the spine of his opponents and they ran away before fighting him). Besides this, he (Indra) had also slayed the son of Vaṣṭa, called Viśvarūpa, who had 3 heads and 6 eyes. It was upon his strength that a sage named Sambardhman Citra had sliced through the rain-bearing cloud with his fingers which had nails as strong as iron.

(vii) Possessing such grand virtues as valour and invincibility, the same Indra provides his warrior devotee, who is challenged by his opponents, potent and powerful weapons to enable the devotee to destroy his enemies. He (Indra) is the one who injects courage, strength, valour and stamina in human beings and prepares them as well as inspires them to enter into battle fearlessly. That honourable Indra has appeared for us (has intervened on our behalf) in a merciless war that is fatal for the enemy, to pierce his sensitive body parts (i.e. spike our enemy in his chest; to stab him or impale him to death with his thunderbolt).

[Note :—This verse invokes Indra to protect the population against invaders. It also instills a sense of fearlessness in the warrior who is heading for war with a confidence building exercise that makes him feel assured of some divine force protecting him and ensuring his victory over the enemy in the ensuing battle. In ancient times, the kings performed fire sacrifices before waging wars; perhaps this verse refers to that practice. It helped to jack-up the morale and confidence of the king and his army, which ultimately lead to their victory. Verse no. 3, 8-10 also have the same tone.]

(viii) He is magnanimous and benevolent like the clouds which are eager to provide grass (fodder) and water (rain) to the cows (or all other domestic and pet animals). He also shows them (the cows and other animals) the way to our homes (i.e. he directs the cattle to their sheds at the end of the day when the animals return home after grazing for the day). When that Indra, in his different forms, reaches the vicinity of the moon, he wears an iron body armour and slays all the enemies like a hawk swooping down on its prey.

(ix) Let that Indra get rid of our great enemies with his powerful and strong weapon (called Vajra or thunderbolt). He had killed a demon named Sūṣana on behalf of sage Kutsa who worshipped and prayed to Indra. He also made the enemies of a poet (sage Bhārgava), who used to sing prayers in Indra's honour, subservient and obedient to the poet (i.e. the enemies of Bhārgava who were jealous of him were made to capitulate before the sage and show respect to him). This poet used to worship the Maruts (Wind-Gods), who inspired the clouds and were assistants of Indra, with equal devotion and fervour.

[Note :—The Maruts are the Wind-Gods. The clouds move in the sky because of wind forces. Indra is the Lord of rain, and without clouds, there can be no rain. That is why, the Maruts and Indra always stay together. The Wind-Gods are assistants to Indra as they help him to direct the clouds to the required place where Indra wants rainfall.]

(x) A provider of wealth and prosperity to those who sing hymns in his glory and honour, Indra, in association with the Maruts who are well wishers of humans, pierces (penetrates or spikes or impales) the enemies (to kill them). He appears very charming to behold with his magnificent form. He is as maverick, illusive, artful and crafty as Varuṇa (the Water-God). Indra, who has most charming and bewitching form and countenance, is considered the protector of the world in all the seasons. He had killed a demon named Araru who had 4 legs.

(xi) When sage Ṛjiśva, the son of Uṣij, most fervently prayed and invoked Indra during the religious sacrifice called Somayajña, and having being blessed by Indra in this form (i.e. Indra having the potentials lauded in this Sūkta), when he attacked the city of his enemies, it was on the strength and potentials powers of these Stotras (hymns) sung in the honour of Indra that he could dismantle and break the shed holding the bulls and other such domestic animals of the demon named Pipro, i.e. he was able to defeat his enemy, the demon, and conquer him and usurp his assets.

[Note :—Somayajña is a religious sacrifice held every 3 years in which a sanctified liquid called 'Soma' is drunk. This liquid is deemed to possess divine qualities that can help to fulfill the desires of the drinker.]

(xii) Oh powerful Indra! This sage (that is, me) named Vabhrāka or Vālmīki hopes to acquire worldly as well as out-worldly happiness, comfort, prosperity and all round wellbeing with the help of the blessing of this Stotra (devotional hymns) sung in your honour. He (me) has walked (come) to you with this specific purpose. Oh Indra to whom a petitioner (my self) has come with an earnest plea! You must protect me, secure me. Please arrange for sufficient food grains (eatables), juices (water and other drinkables) and home (a house or any dwelling place which is peaceful and comfortable) for me (or for all of us).

* * *

Appendix - 3

Metaphysical concepts appearing in the text

Ātmā and the five sheath/veils surrounding it :—This is the pure-self, the pure consciousness which is a microscopic reflection of the vast macrocosmic Soul of the cosmos called Brahma. The Ātmā provides life or consciousness to the inert layers of matter consisting of the 5 elements of air, water, space, fire and earth which crystalise to form the five coverings or sheaths around the pure Ātmā, and together (the Ātmā and the five sheaths) they create what we call the 'living being', whether plant, animal or humans.

The Pañca Kośa :—Or the five sheaths covering or enveloping the Ātmā are as follows—(i) The food sheath; (ii) the vital air sheath; (iii) the mental sheath; (iv) the intellectual sheath; (v) and the bliss sheath.

The Food Sheath :—Is the physical body and derives its name because it is nourished by the food eaten by the creature. It consists of 5 organs of perception (eyes, ears, tongue, nose, skin) and 5 organs of action (hands, legs, mouth, genitals, anus).

The Vital Air Sheath :—Is the five-fold faculties of perception (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching), excretion (faeces, urine, sperm, sputum, sweat etc.), digestion (stomach, intestine, liver, pancreas, gall bladder, appendix), circulation (blood stream, artery, vein, capillary, heart) and thinking (the power to entertain, absorb and assimilate new information and thought).

The Mental Sheath :—It consists of the equipment which receives external stimuli through the sense organs and links it to the organs of action. Integrated response of body to the stimuli is done through the mind sheath. It is a continuous flow of thoughts. Because the mind is characterised by being in a state of flux, the mind (mental sheath), which is like a clerk, receives information (as stimuli) from the organs of perception and dispatches them to either the organs of action or the intellect when certain situations demand intelligent thinking and discrimination. Therefore, the mental sheath controls the vital air sheath and the food sheath.

The Intellect Sheath :—It acts as a controlling mechanism over the mind; It regulates, filters and modifies the response to the various stimuli. It has the discriminatory power which the mind, left alone to itself, lacks.

The intellect sheath is the chief of the whole setup—in fact it controls the mind sheath, and through it, the functioning of the creature. It is the task master that directs the reckless horde of school boys running amok hither and thither, as it were. Those boys who obey this teacher become civilised and educated while the rest of the bunch remain buffoons or ruffians. The intellect can distinguish between the good and the bad, which the mental sheath cannot. The intellect can see beyond the realm of the known while the mind cannot. The intellect sheath is the spring board for all ideas and ideologies. The intellect helps to stabilise and channelise the mind even as the dam controls the river and harnesses its immense energy to produce powerful electricity.

These two sheaths—the mind and the intellect—are called the subtle sheaths or bodies. They have no physical structure in conventional terms like the gross or physical body called the food sheath or Annamaya Kośa (consisting of the organs of perception and organs of action) as well as the air sheath (called the Prāṇamaya Kośa) of the creature. This subtle sheath has only functional aspect. The mental and intellect sheaths are like softwares of a computer vis-à-vis the food and vital sheaths which resemble the hardware paraphernalia of the entire system.

The Bliss Sheath :—Is the innermost sheath surrounding the Ātmā/the soul. It consists of 'inherent tendencies' or 'Vāsanās' and 'Vṛttis' before they are manifested into thoughts or actions. The intellect, mind etc. perform under the guidance and control of the bliss sheath. It is so-called because an individual experiences relative bliss, happiness, joy, contentedness, peace and tranquility when he is associated with it.

In the waking and dream states, a man experiences constant agitation of the mind, but once he reaches the realm of deep sleep state (bliss sheaths), he feels undisturbed, tranquil, peaceful and full of bliss. All agitations cease here. It is a relative experience vis-a-vis the other sheaths. This sheath is also called the Causal Body of the creature.

The 5 sheaths are all inane, inert, inactive and constitute of matter. This together form the personality of the Jīva. He is conscious of all that his happening around him but these 5 sheaths are inert themselves. So, naturally, there must be something distinct and separate from these sheaths that lends the Jīva the so-called life or consciousness. That factor which lends life or consciousness to the Jīva is called Ātmā, pure consciousness or the pure self of the creature. It is also the true identity or self of the Jīva.

		Deep sleeper	⇔	Causal body		
Jīva's	→	Dreamer	⇔	Subtle Body	←	Ātmā
Personality		Waker	⇔	Gross Body		

Diagram showing interaction between the Jīva and the Ātmā.

The States of Existence :—The Ātmā (soul) has four states of existence in a creature—the waking state, the dream state, the deep sleep state and the Turīya state of existence or consciousness. During the 'waking state', the Ātmā acts through the gross body (the physical body) of a man in its interaction with the outside world. During the 'dream state of existence', the Ātmā withdraws from the gross body and limits its interaction to the subtle body (the mind-intellect complex). During the 'deep sleep state of existence', the Ātmā withdraws itself into the causal body consisting of 'Vāsanās' (inherent passions and desires) and 'Vṛttis' (inherent tendencies and inclinations). But the pure consciousness, when it plunges within itself, that is, inside the causal body called the bliss sheath, it attains absolute bliss. This is called the 4th state called 'Turīya state of existence', and it is obtained by ascetics during Samādhi (a trance like state) when all the three sheaths covering the soul—food/air, mind/intellect and bliss—are removed. With the removal of these various sheaths, the Ātmā/soul of the individual (which is pure microcosmic consciousness) merges itself with the vast space around it (called the macrocosmic consciousness) because all separating sheaths have been done away with.

To explain the above concept, we may take the help of diagram and illustration :—

Man = Pure consciousness or Ātmā + Causal body (Vāsanās)
+ Subtle body (mind-intellect) + Gross body (sense organs)

The body-mind-intellect are inane and inert. The live factor is the pure consciousness or Ātmā. This pure consciousness functions through its association with the causal body, the subtle body and the gross body, or in other words, the deep sleeper, the dreamer and the waker state of consciousness.

	Body	**(Consisting of)**		**Called the**	
	Gross body	(sense organs)	⇔	Waker	
Man →	Subtle body	(mind-intellect)	⇔	Dreamer	←Ātmā (pureconsciousness)
	Causal body	(Vāsanās)	⇔	Deep sleeper	

This combination of 'waker-dreamer-deep sleeper' states of consciousness of a man is called Microcosm. The pure consciousness has its independent existence from the above three states, and this independence is called the 4th state of consciousness called the 'Turīya state' or the blissful state of consciousness which has the bliss sheath as its external boundary.

According to Haṃsopaniṣad of Śukla Yajur Veda, the Ātmā residing in the heart of the creature is in an 8-petal lotus. The tendrils of this lotus described in this Upaniṣad represent the waking state of consciousness, the stalk represents the dream state of conscious, and the thalamus represents the deep sleep state of consciousness. When a creature abandons/discards the metaphoric habitat or dwelling in the 8-petal lotus represents by his heart and rises above its precincts (just like a householder snapping all his relationships with his home and takes to the path of Vānaprastha), it obtains the forth state of consciousness called the 'Turīya state'. Eventually, when the creature, in the form of his subtle Ātmā (which according to the definition given to it by the Upaniṣad, inter alia, is 'Haṃsa' which means a 'Swan' and is a metaphor for divinity, purity and wisdom) merges with or dissolves in the cosmic 'Nāda' (all-pervading subtle sound in the cosmos), then the final or the so-called 'Turīyātīta' stage is achieved (verse no. 8).

The **brain** has two components—the intellect and the mind. The former is under the direct control of the Ātmā while the mind is subordinate to the intellect. The mind receives worldly stimuli through the sense organs, passes them to the intellect, obtains instructions from the intellect and passes them on to the organs of action—this state prevails when the man is 'awake'.

Now, when he is asleep, there are two stages—either he dreams or he does not. During the 'dreams state', the inherent Vāsanās (the hidden passions, yearning and desires) come into play at the sub conscious level and the mind lives up to all those Vāsanās in an imaginary world. But when there is no dream, i.e. during the 'deep sleep state' of consciousness, the Ātmā is freed from interference and it reverts back to its original form of being 'nothingness, having no feelings and no emotions', just like the case wherein the mirror is removed from the front of a man and his image vanishes from it and the image reverts back into its primary source or object, which in this case is the man himself whose image was formed in the mirror. The Ātmā is an image of the supreme Brahma. When the mirror of the mind-intellect is removed, it (Ātmā) reverts back into its primary form which is Brahma. So, it is the 'deep sleep state of consciousness' in which the creature comes in direct contact of his true identity or true self, which is called Ātmā or pure consciousness.

For the external world, a sleeping man is as good as being dead. For example, if a sleeping man is attacked by someone, he won't resist; he won't even know what has happened just in front of him while he was asleep. He is not dead, but for all practical purposes 'he is as good as dead'. He neither feels pain nor happiness when in a deep sleep state of existence, which is beyond the dream state of sleep. The 'deep sleep state' is called 'Svaprānta'—literally meaning 'in a state of suspended animation, or a self-imposed state of coma, or a state of being virtually dead, or coming to a stage voluntarily which is almost like being dead but is not actual death'.

This **Microcosm** is the same as the **Macrocosm** in the larger scheme or scale of things, just like a single molecule of water with the formulae H_2O is the same whether in a cup or spoon and the vast, fathomless ocean. Here, the microcosm refers to the individual creature/Jīva/man and the macrocosm refers to the Virāṭ/Lord God/Nature.

Now, as has been explained in the foregoing discussion, it is relatively easy to control the subtle and the gross bodies through acquisition of truthful knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment. The greatest problem arises with the causal body consisting of Vṛttis and

Vāsanās (passions and desires; inherent tendencies and inclinations). This can be solved by integrating the objective mind (the 'mind') and the subjective mind (the 'intellect'). When both are integrated, then the creature reacts in a healthy manner. When actions are controlled by the wisened intellect, the inherent tendencies of the creature fail to exert their influence on it and they gradually vanish (i.e. removed or catherised). This results in the seeker merging his Microcosm with the Macrocosm.

According to Upaniṣadic sages/seers, 'Life' can be understood to be a series of experiences and that any definition of life should necessarily accept our moment-to-moment experiences as the units of life. The sages/seers further understood that an experience is not possible without three fundamental factors—the experiencer, the object of experience, and the relationship between the two, the experiencing. The experiencer is the subject who gains experiences of the world through the instruments of experience, namely, the body, mind, and intellect. Everyone gains experiences of three different worlds through these three different equipments viz.—through the body, the world of objects; through the mind, the world of feelings; and through the intellect, the world of ideas.

If a person experiences the world of objects through his body, then he should be different from his body. If he experiences the world of feelings through his mind, then he, the experiencer, cannot be the mind. Again, if he gains experiences of the world of ideas through the intellect, he cannot be the intellect. He seems to be a different factor or entity altogether from these three instruments of experiences, though, of course, he has a very intimate relationship with them.

When the subject is identified with the intellect, he becomes the 'thinker', experiencing the world of ideas; when identified with the mind, he becomes the 'feeler' experiencing the world of emotions; and when identified with the body, he becomes the 'perceiver' experiencing the world of objects. But he, the subject, is neither the field of experience nor the instruments of experience. He must be totally different from them both.

The effect that ego and desires (Ahaṃkāra and Kāma) as well as Vāsanās and Vṛttis (inherent desires and tendencies) have on the mind, how they corrupt the objective mind and how their removal/

catheterisation purifies the mind and brings it under the direct control of the subjective mind (the intellect) of the creature is explained with the help of a diagram at the end of this appendix.

The **relationship between microcosm and macrocosm** varies according to the individual personality of the man. The grossest man with the maximum load of Vāsanās and Vṛttis imagines a wide chasm/gulf between the microcosm and the macrocosm. As the individual cleanses or purges himself of these inherent tendencies, this blending increases, and when it vanishes altogether, the distinction between the two also vanishes i.e. there is oneness between the microcosmic soul (creature's Ātmā) and the macrocosmic soul (Parmātmā).

According to the theory of Vedānta, the Lord has two forms–Macrocosmic and Microcosmic. The macrocosmic form of the Lord is the Virāṭ which is huge, large, colossus, vast, gigantic, beyond all measurement. The microcosmic form of the Lord is the miniscule creature of this world. The gross body of the Lord vis-à-vis the gross body of the creature are clarified Diagrammatically below :—

	Microcosmic (creature)		**Macrocosmic (Virāṭ Lord)**
(i)	Individual gross body (food+vital-air sheath)	=	Total of all gross bodies is called Virāṭ
(ii)	Individual subtle body (the mind-intellect sheath)	=	Total of the subtle bodies is called Hiranyagarbh
(iii)	Individual causal body (bliss sheath)	=	Total of causal bodies is called Īśvara
	This is the single creature		**This is the sum total of all the creatures represented by the Lord.**

Vṛttis and Vāsanās :—*'All human actions have one or more of these 7 causes—chance, nature, compulsion, habit, passion and desire'—Aristotle.*

'Do not ye yet understand that what so entereth the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those thing that proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart (and the mind); and they defile the man for out of the heart (and the mind) proceed evil thought, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness (lies), blasphemies. These are the thing that defile a man' (Bible, St. Matthew, 15/17-20).

The pure consciousness (Ātmā) is the core of a man's personality. It is infinite, pure, all-pervading, omniscient, enlightened, changeless and supreme truth/reality. However, its infinite nature is clouded by the various Vṛttis (inherent tendencies and inclinations) and Vāsanās (desires and passion inherent in a man) resulting in the creation of a finite, limited, impure, corrupt, not fully enlightened, ever changing personality of the human being—such a person is called the 'perceiver-feeler-thinker-doer' entity. When the various Vṛttis or Vāsanās are eliminated or excluded (i.e. catheterised), the attitude undergoes transformation and metamorphosis from a perceiver-feeler-thinker entity (corresponding to the gross body, the mind and intellect collectively called the subtle body) into simple pure consciousness which, in reality, is the true identity of the creature. Please see the diagram appended to this appendix for further clarification on this subject.

Man's real and truthful nature is pure consciousness but he passes through the three different, distinct, relative states of the waker, dreamer and deep sleeper states as a result of the interaction or play of consciousness in the Gross, the Subtle and the Causal bodies respectively. No sooner the identification of the pure consciousness with any one or more of these bodies is removed than his original, pure, natural form is unfolded. This state is called self-realisation, or Godhood—or it is also called the state of supreme and sublime bliss, joy, happiness, peace and tranquility. Hence, when the pleural personality is removed, the real, singularly unique personality shines through.

It is the Ātmā which ignites/kindles/infuses life in the other five sheaths which are, left to themselves, inert and lifeless even as a piece of iron is lifeless without the infusion of life into it by a magnet held nearby. This magnet is separate/distinct from the iron but it invisibly gives life to the dead, gross and inert piece of iron. The iron is the five sheaths and the magnet is the Ātmā. Remove the Ātmā and the man is as lifeless as the piece of iron.

According to Haṃsopaniṣad of Śukla Yajur Veda, the Ātmā resides in the heart which is shaped like an 8-petal lotus. Each petal of this lotus symbolises one type of 'Vṛtti'. The petal facing to the east represents the righteous and noble inclinations; the petal facing south-east corner (Āgneya) represents sleep, drowsiness, lethargy, inertia, and disinclination to work; the petal facing to the south direction represents cruel tendencies; the petal facing in the south-west angle (Nairṛtya) represents the inclination of the mind to be sinful, unrighteous and pervert; the petal facing towards the west represents the desires for sports, action and play; that petal facing to the north-west direction (Vāyavīya) represents the desire to be on the move, to go, roam and wander; the petal in the north direction represents the affection of a creature for Brahmā, its true self and its desires to endear it; the petal in the north-east direction represents the desires for charity; and the petals surrounding the thalamus represent the tendency to renounce, to be dispassionate and detached from the artificial, sensual world (verse no. 8).

There are three types of 'Vāsanās' as follows—(i) The 'Vāsanās' pertaining to the body relate to one's son, property and wealth which a person has acquired and enjoys, and the world around him—his relatives, his fame, his contacts, his friends, his obligation, contracts and responsibility. It also means gratification of the sense organs of the body as well as to appease those who are related to him with this body. (ii) The 'Vāsanās' pertaining to the scriptures relate to studying them more and more, acquiring scholarship, expertise and accompanying fame and money through them, relying too much on the letter of the scriptures and not their spirit, engrossing oneself in endless doubts and debates leading to confusions and contradictions. The scriptures are vast and like a fathomless sea. Trying to realise the Supreme Truth by delving into the depths of the scriptures is like extracting pearl by churning the ocean. Through it is theoretically possible, but practically it is impossible. (iii) The Vāsanās relating to the world are the various attractions and allurements that his apparently enchanting and captivating world presents to a person. It also refer to the various and endless responsibilities and obligations, real and imaginary, that a person has, or imagines he has, towards this world.

The three Guṇas :—The three characteristics inherent present in the creature are the three thought textures which bombard the mind. These three thought textures are manifestations of the **Vṛttis and Vāsanās** (inherent tendencies or desires) of the creature which mire its soul as a covering or veil.

The Sātvika desire is the veil covering the soul like a smoke covering the fire. A slight breeze will remove this smoke. Similarly a little bit of prayer and meditation will remove the Sāttvika desires; its removal requires the least effort. It is the foremost and the best amongst the three characteristics of a creature such as good and positive virtuous, righteousness, creativity, noble deeds and thoughts etc.

The Rājasika desires can be compared to dust on a mirror. In this case some dusting and rubbing is needed to clean the mirror; a greater effort is needed. It is the medium characteristic marked by ambitions, desires, passions, expansionist tendencies, desire to sustain etc.

The Tāmasika desires covering the soul are like a foetus in the womb—they cannot be removed easily and require diligence, effort, dedicated and careful handling requiring time and patience. It is the base and most lowly of the three characteristics such as sin, evil, pervertness, immorality, vices, misdemeanours, anger, inertia et al.

The concept that 'I' is the body and not the 'pure conscious soul' leads to ignorance-based ego (Ahaṅkāra). The constant concept of I vis-à-vis the body and this world leads to the sense of possessiveness in the creature. 'Pure consciousness' mired by ego becomes 'a conditioned consciousness' and fails to remain pure. This is why ego (Ahaṃkāra) has been likened to a minister of the king. It directs and regulates the actions of the consciousness which, under its influence, loses its independence. This 'conditioned consciousness'—working through the mind-intellect-ego combine is called, inter-alia, 'Citta'. The word also means conscious memory. Hence this memory acts as a referral library for the intellect. The latter falls back on it and relies on it whenever it is in doubt. The quality of books in the library guides the student; similarly, the quality of inherent tendencies stored in the library of Citta directly effects the inputs of the intellect, and through it, the mind and successively down the hierarchy to the body and its organs of perception and action.

Although the soul has nothing to do with this command chain (i.e. memory—inherent tendencies/ego/Vāsanās—intellect—mind—body—action—result—more experience—stored in memory—and the chain continues), but for all practical purposes the Ātmā/soul is deemed responsible for it because of its sovereign nature.

So, the sincere seeker/aspirant should delineate this conscious from the rest of the chain and break the nexus between them so as to allow the glory of the pure consciousness of the soul to shine through like the splendorous sun breaking through from behind a curtain of clouds.

It is like removing the various veils or covers from around the candle so that its light shines through the darkness of the room and illuminates all the corners of it.

The proportion of the three Guṇas decides the nature, natural temperament, tendencies, habits and inclination of the creatures. For example, a person with a greater proportion of 'Sāttvika' (noble) characteristic will be considered nobler than a man with a greater proportion of 'Rājasika' or 'Tāmasika' qualities. So we can say that sages, seers, prophets, scholars and generally enlightened persons have a high degree of 'Sāttvika' qualities in them. Kings and householders who live a noble life are example of those with higher amount of 'Rājasika' quality in them, while sinners, killers, drunks, rowdy elements, cheats etc. are those people with higher 'Tāmasika' quality in them. These Guṇas have direct bearing on the personality of a man. A separate full page diagram depicts the relationship between these Guṇas and the personality of a man.

Mental flux :—The five states of the mind are the following—(i) Kṣipta, (ii) Mūḍha, (iii) Vikṣipta, (iv) Ekāgra and (v) Nirudha. The 'Kṣipta' is the worst type of mind characterised by extreme recklessness and restlessness. It is susceptible to various negative traits such as confusion, conflicts, anger, anxiety, worry, tension, agitations of all kinds etc.

The 'Mūḍha' is the dull, inert and indolent state of mind. These first two states of mind are predominantly 'Tamas' in nature.

The 'Vikṣipta' state is a 'distracted' state of mind in which it swings between the extremes of calmness and agitation. This is a 'Rājasika' quality.

The 'Ekāgra' state is a focused or concentrated mind. It is a state in which the mind can keep alert and pin-pointed on any subject it is focusing upon. It helps to cultivate discipline in the aspirant.

The 'Nirudha' state is that state of mind in which there is no mental flux of any kind. It is a kind of trance like state of bliss and happiness. The last two states of mind are called 'Sāttvika' qualities of the creature.

The 5 Basic Elements and their Manifestations

(Based on Triśikhi Brahmaṇopaniṣad, 1/5)

(A) Sky Element → (i) Antaḥkaraṇa (discriminatory intellect and wisdom), (ii) Mana (mind), (iii) Buddhi (intelligence), (iv) Citta (intellect, memory, recollection, concentration) and (v) Ahaṃkāra (ego, pride, haughtiness, hypocrisy, arrogance). Its colour is light blue. it extend uptil the top of the head.

(B) Wind Element → (i) Samāna (the vital wind controlling equal distribution of nourishment and circulation), (ii) Udāna (wind moving upwards; controls expectoration), (iii) Vyāna (wind that pervades throughout the body; maintains equilibrium), (iv) Apāna (wind passing down the intestine; controls ingestion, digestion and excretion of food) and (v) Prāṇa (breath). Its colour is grey and it resembles smoke or haze.

(C) Fire element → Orange of perception, such as—(i) ears, (ii) skin, (iii) eyes, (iv) tongue and (v) nose. Its colour is red like vermillion and its hapes is like tongues of flame.

(D) Water element → Senses of perception—(i) hearing, (ii) touch, (iii) sight, (iv) taste and (v) smell. Its colour is silvery white and it is shaped like the crescent moon.

(E) Earth element → Organs of action—(i) mouth, (ii) hands, (iii) legs, (iv) anus and (v) genitals. Its colour is light yellow and it has 4 corners.

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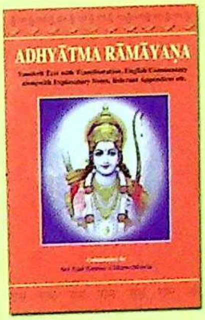
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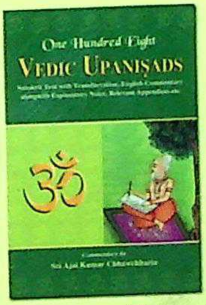
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